"THE LAST GOOD KISS"

Revised Screenplay

by

Walter Hill

From the Novel by James Crumley

Producer: Sidney Beckerman

Director: Walter Hill

WH

"THE LAST GOOD KISS"

FADE IN

EXT. BEER HALL - SONOMA, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT 1

SOUNDS of Tex-Mex jukebox music fill the air...A sign, "Rosie's Paradise," blinks in red neon.

Once a service station, the ghost of a flying red horse glows faintly on the front wall; wrecked cars, deep in weeds, surround the ramshackle, unpainted frame building...A Cadillac convertible is parked in front next to an old pickup and a vintage Ford.

As the record changes, an El Camino cruises up slowly and parks beside the Cadillac...

C.W. ("SONNY") SUGHRUE climbs out of the El Camino holding a flashlight; he checks the license plate on the Caddie, then leans in and opens the glove compartment...An empty whiskey bottle falls out.

Sonny holds the vehicle registration up to the light, then puts it back in place.

INT. ROSIE'S - NIGHT 2

As rundown inside as out...
Dark booths line the wall opposite the bar with a battered pool table in between.

ROSIE FLOWERS, a middle-aged California Okie with a well-worn face, leans on the bar, arms folded, eyes closed. Across the way LESTER and ONEY, two rednecks, sit nursing their beers...

Further along the rail, ABRAHAM TRAHEARNE, dressed in rumpled gabardines, slumps over the occupant of the next seat, FIREBALL ROBERTS, a large bulldog who contentedly slurps beer from an ashtray.

Sonny glides onto a stool between Lester and Trahearne. The jukebox selection ends, bringing an uncomfortable silence...

Trahearne sips his drink and mutters to the dog.

TRAHEARNE
The bluff we face is cracking up...before this green Pacific wind...this...The whale's briny stink...ah, Christ...

Cont.

WH

SONNY
Sure do like a peaceful bar in the middle of the evening.

LESTER
Ain't that the truth. But I tell you, mister, that there bulldog, ol' Fireball Roberts, is a mean drunk, so we generally stay pretty quiet until the bastard passes out.

SONNY
He don't look real mean to me.

Trahearne has an inspiration.

TRAHEARNE
Dogged we were, old friend, doggerel we became, and dogshit we too shall be...

No one is listening.

LESTER
I'll tell you the God's truth, mister, that bulldog is meaner 'n a tow sack full of rattlesnakes. Look at this.

He lifts his pants leg.

LESTER
Fifty-four stitches. All I did was step on his foot a bit, and he near tore my leg off. Ol' Oney here had to hit the son of a bitch with a pool cue to get him to turn loose.

ONEY
Broke the damned cue stick right in half.

SONNY
Just goes to prove you can't tell how mean a dog is by looking at him.

LESTER
That's for damn sure. Look at ol' Rosie there...all peaceful and quiet. You oughta see her when she gets her tail over her back. She'd just as soon shoot your eyes out as look at you.

Rosie smiles without opening her eyes.

LESTER
If'n there's too many for Fireball to handle, ol' Rosie's got a .380 automatic with the trigger sear filed down to a nubbin. Just as likely to shoot nine times as once. She ain't had to touch it off but one damn time, but I tell you, mister, it sure got quiet in here.

He points to a cluster of holes in the far wall.

ROSIE
Lester, you're so full of shit.

Looks over at Sonny.

ROSIE
Ol' Fireball there is all the protection a woman alone in the world needs.

ONEY
Then ask her how come she's got that there pistola in that cigar box back there behind the bar.

Trahearne pipes up again.

TRAHEARNE
Dogs, they say, are man's best friend, but their pants have no pockets, their thirst no end...

Lester laughs loudly.
Fireball growls which immediately halts Lester's jocular mood...
A large, mangey orange cat waddles out from behind the bar.

SONNY
Cat drink beer, too?

ROSIE
Sumbitch usta drink like a fish, but he got to be too much trouble. He'd get so drunk, he'd start up tom-cattin' in all the wrong places. One night he started up a-humpin' everything in sight... pool table legs, cues, folks' legs, anything that didn't move fast enough, and then he did.

ROSIE (Cont.)
somethin' nasty on a lady's slacks and somebody laughed and damned if we didn't have the biggest fistfight I ever seen. The state took my license for six weeks, so I had that scutter cut off. Right at the source. He ain't wanted a drink since.

LESTER
You ain't from around here, are you, mister?

SONNY
Can't say that I am.

LESTER
You looked rode hard and put up wet when you come in, buddy.

Sonny ignores him and heads toward Trahearne who slowly straightens up, an arm around Fireball to balance himself.

SONNY
Mr. Trahearne...

TRAHEARNE
Wondered how long it'd take you to make a move. I'd rate you a little on the slow side, but then you're more of a runt than the others...

SONNY
Mr. Trahearne, your ex-wife's worried about your health. A week ago she sent me out to find you and make sure you're okay.

TRAHEARNE
Boys, you hear that? My dear ex-wife's hiring people to follow me around.

Lester and Oney push their glasses away, giving Sonny a long look.

ONEY
I ain't never heard nothin' so chicken-shit.

LESTER
Why the hell you houndin' this fella?

TRAHEARNE
What's the world coming to when a man can't slip out for an occasional drink?

Trahearne sits back on his stool, smiling, as Lester and Oney come over.

LESTER
What's the matter? This poor old man behind in his alimony? I know your kind, buddy. That goddamned whore I used to be married to sicked one of you low-rent sons of bitches on me just because I was two months behind on my payments, and I tell you, I kicked his ass all over my front yard, and I got half a mind to kick yours.

SONNY
Let me buy you boys a beer and I'll explain.

LESTER
I don't drink with no trash.

ROSIE
I don't want no trouble in here, boys.

SONNY
No trouble, ma'am. I'll just ease on down the road and handle this some other way.

LESTER
That ain't near good enough.

Lester steps forward and swings at Sonny who ducks the punch then backhands Lester on the side of the head with a half-full beer bottle...

Lester falls sideways across the floor to his knees, clasping his bloody ear.

SONNY
That good enough?

Trahearne swings wildly at Sonny who jerks away...Trahearne's miss sends him careening to the floor.

Cont.

LESTER
Goddamn it, Oney, get the gun!

Oney dashes around to the cigar box just as Rosie lunges for it too. As they struggle for the pistol, Sonny moves toward the door and Lester rams his shoulder into Sonny's knee, knocking him down...As Sonny gets him in a wrestling hold, Oney tries to bring up the pistol despite Rosie's efforts at holding it down. Fireball leaps the bar...

Trahearne staggers to his feet, crashes into the pool table and scrambles underneath it as the pistol goes off...

Fireball sinks his teeth into Oney's back. Oney fires again, but this time the bullet hits his own foot. A second shot blows up the beer cooler, a third goes through the bar front and hits Trahearne in the left buttock, a fourth powders the nine ball on the pool table and the rest of the clip goes through the roof.

A long moment of silence...

Then Sonny slowly stands up, Lester locked to his knee. Oney sinks out of sight behind the bar with Fireball still hanging on.

SONNY
Goddamn it, Lester, you're bleeding all over my britches.

LESTER
I'm awful sorry 'bout that, mister.

Lets go and moves over to sit in a booth.

LESTER
Got real western there for a minute, didn't it?

SONNY
No shit.

Fireball trots out from behind the bar, climbs onto the platform rail and moves along the bar top, tipping over bottles and lapping up the beer.

SONNY
Don't believe I've ever seen anything to beat that.

LESTER
Goddamn bulldog.

Sonny goes behind the bar where Oney has passed out, his bloody foot stuck out in front of him.

ROSIE
Anybody killed?

SONNY
Got some walking wounded, ma'am, but no body count.

ROSIE
Whiskey's right above your head. Why don't you wait a bit before you call the law. We gotta find some way to explain this mess.

SONNY
Good idea.

Sonny pours bourbon onto a towel and cleans up Oney's foot.

LESTER
How's ol' Oney?

SONNY
Not too bad. Blew off a couple of toes.

LESTER
Big uns or little uns?

Sonny walks over to Lester to tend his ear.

SONNY
Little ones.

LESTER
Shit, that ain't nothin'.

A few towel strokes and the blood on the side of Lester's face disappears.

SONNY
Don't believe no ladies going to be sticking their tongue in that ear of yours for a time.

LESTER
Never much cared for that, anyway. How's the old man?

SONNY
Damned if I know.

He walks toward the pool table.

SONNY
Mr. Tranearne, are you all right?

TRAHEARNE
No, goddamn it, I'm not. I think I've stopped a bullet...

Trahearne lies on his belly.
Sonny leans down and tugs at Trahearne's gabardines to find the wound.

TRAHEARNE
How's it look?

SONNY
Looks like your ass.

TRAHEARNE
I always knew I'd die a comic death.

SONNY
This ain't gonna be the day. Just a flesh wound.

TRAHEARNE
Easy enough for you to say. It's not your flesh.

Trahearne raises up to look at him, tries to stand but can't make it.

TRAHEARNE
Well, my ex-wife ought to be pleased with your ingenuity... shooting me in the ass so I can't sit on a bar stool.

SONNY
I didn't shoot you.

TRAHEARNE
You're going to get the blame anyway.

The SOUND of sirens approaching...
Lester ambles over, still holding the towel to his ear.

LESTER
Whatcha call him?

2 Cont.

TRAHEARNE
Trahearne. Abraham Trahearne. The very same man who writes all those brilliant novels.

LESTER
Ain't much of a reader myself.

Lester peeks down at Trahearne under the table, then turns and walks away.

LESTER
Shit.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSIE'S - NIGHT 3

A police car sirens out of the parking lot, leading away an ambulance.
Rosie and Sonny walk from the street back to the doorway...

ROSIE
Them boys sure do favor the sound of those damned things.

SONNY
About the only fun they get out of life.

ROSIE
You speakin' from experience?

SONNY
I've ridden in the backseat of a few police cars in my time. ...Sorry for the trouble.

ROSIE
Wasn't your fault. It was that damned worthless Lester. Thanks for dancin' them deputies around for me.

SONNY
I did it for me as much as for you.

ROSIE
No matter. Worked out fine... Name's Rosie Flowers.

She extends her hand to Sonny.

Cont.

SONNY
C.W. Sughrue. Most folks call me Sonny.

ROSIE
Say, my momma had a batch of cousins down around Altus, Oklahoma, by the name of Sughrue. Any kin of yours?

SONNY
Could be. My daddy's folks all come down to Texas from Oklahoma some time back. I'm the only one ended up in the Northwest.

ROSIE
Whereabouts?

SONNY
Meriwether, Montana.

ROSIE
You get around some. Hell, I ain't been ten miles from this place since I went to my momma's funeral down in Fresno.

SONNY
Freewheelin' ain't all it's cracked up to be. Not all the time anyway.

ROSIE
Neither's stayin' home... You want a beer?

They head inside.

INT. ROSIE'S - NIGHT 4

She draws two drafts.

ROSIE
How come you were after Mr. Trahearne anyway? 'Course you don't have to tell me if it ain't none of my business.

SONNY
His ex-wife hired me to find him before he drank himself into the hospital.

ROSIE
Good luck on that...Only person harder on a man than an ex-wife is a new young one.

SONNY
He's got one of those, too.

ROSIE
No wonder he's been hanging around here all week...So that's what you do for a living, find folk?

SONNY
Sometimes. Other times I just look.

ROSIE
How long you been trackin' him?

SONNY
A week.

ROSIE
Get paid by the day, huh?

SONNY
Usually.

ROSIE
This job oughta do you nicely.

SONNY
Hope so. But she might feel unkindly with the old man getting shot up and all. Decide I'm overpriced.

ROSIE
Sue her.

SONNY
Ever try to sue rich folks?

ROSIE
Hell, Sonny, I don't even know any rich folks. What're you gonna do now?

SONNY
Hang around the hospital until he gets out, I guess. Then take him home.

ROSIE
Well, I could put you on to a piece of work while you're hangin' 'round.

SONNY
I usually only work on one thing at a time. What ya got, bad checks?

ROSIE
Enough to paper a wall, but that ain't the problem...It's my baby girl. She run off on me. I thought maybe you could spend a few days lookin' for her.

She goes over to a dusty stack of papers and magazines and pulls out a high school yearbook.

SONNY
Well, I don't know...

ROSIE
I mean to pay you.

She withdraws a dirty wad of bills out of her pocket.

SONNY
It's not that. I just need some time off the road.

ROSIE
Ain't I good enough to buy your time?

Sonny accepts money but puts it down on the table.

SONNY
How long ago did she take off?

ROSIE
Ten years ago. April.

SONNY
Ever heard from her?

ROSIE
Not a word.

SONNY
Ten years is too long...A year's usually too long, but ten years is forever. Why start looking now?

ROSIE
Betty Sue's all I got left.

SONNY
Where's your husband?

Cont.

ROSIE
That son of a bitch. Least when he was with me I had him a job sellin' aluminum cookware on time to widow-wimmen. I run the worthless bastard off...

SONNY
Sorry.

ROSIE
Don't be...Thought he was Hank Williams. Ever' time we'd get some money ahead, he'd clear out the bank account, pick up some goddamned carhop and lite out for Nashville, then come back in six months with his tail between his legs... Another beer?

SONNY
I'll get it.

He goes behind the bar.

ROSIE
Betty Sue went over to San Francisco one Saturday afternoon with this boyfriend of hers. He said she just stepped out of the car at a red light and walked off without sayin' a word.

SONNY
Any reason to think he might have lied?

ROSIE
No reason. I've known him all his life, and his momma's a friend of mine. She's been fixin' my hair once a week for nearly twenty years. And Albert, he was tore up by it something terrible. He kept lookin' for Betty Sue for years after I give up. His momma says he still asks about her every time she sees him.

SONNY
Did you report it to the police?

ROSIE
Of course I did. What kinda mother would I be if I hadn't... Not that they did diddly-squat about it.

She boosts Fireball.

ROSIE
Goddamned useless dog. Get outta my sight.

Fireball stumbles to the door and nestles down there.

SONNY
The last runaway I found in the city was a fourteen-year-old boy in a speed freak shooting gallery ...He'd been stabbed fifty-seven times with a paring knife. That's when I moved to Montana.

ROSIE
I wish I could explain it so's you'd understand how I feel. She's the only child I got left. I seen both my sons in coffins. Buddy got blown up in Vietnam right after Betty Sue took off. And my Lonnie got run over by a dune buggy down in Pismo Beach last summer...I ain't beggin'. I'm just sayin' if you got the time, I'll pay you what I can...

A long moment, then Sonny shrugs...

SONNY
Can you give me the names of her friends...

ROSIE
Sure. Here, I can even show 'em to ya.

Rosie opens the yearbook and a wallet-sized snapshot falls out. She hands it to Sonny.

ROSIE
That there's Betty Sue...

Sonny looks down at the photograph.

SONNY
What was she like?

ROSIE
You'll see when you talk to folks. I'll let you find out for yourself...

CUT TO:

INT. DANCE STUDIO - SANTA ROSA - AFTERNOON 5

It is a large room with mirrored walls and dance barres. Tchaikovsky plays over a scratchy amplifier. Sonny stands in the doorway watching a row of twenty TENNAGE GIRLS doing ballet exercises as Instructor CHARLES GLEESON moves among them, adjusting limbs and arms into proper form.

Gleeson is a slender, balding man in a turtleneck top, drawstring pants and ballet slippers. His hands are adorned with turquoise rings.

Gleeson looks up, sees Sonny and strides over to him.

GLEESON
Can I help you.

Sonny holds up the photo of Betty Sue Flowers. Gleeson looks and turns back to his class.

GLEESON
Linda, step up and lead the class through the warm-up. I'll be right back.

LINDA, a very pretty girl with long hair in a bright leotard with knee-high warm-up socks, glides to the center of the room.

INT. GLEESON OFFICE 6

A small room with a wall-length window overlooking the dance studio.

Sonny stares out at Linda as she stretches gracefully.

Gleeson looks down at the photo.

GLEESON
Betty Sue Flowers. I haven't heard anything about her since she ran away...when was it? Six or seven years ago.

SONNY
Ten.

GLEESON
Time flies.

SONNY
So they say.

Cont.

Gleeson hands back the photo.

GLEESON
What can I do for you?

SONNY
I'm looking for her. Her mother says you were close to her so I thought I'd start with you.

GLEESON
I'm afraid I can't be much help...

SONNY
Did you know her long?

GLEESON
She came to take lessons when she was thirteen, usually a little too old for a dance career, but she was special. And she worked hard. I've never had a more disciplined pupil. If she had kept it up, she could have made it... Like I say, she was special.

SONNY
How old was she the first time you fucked her?

Pause.

GLEESON
Would you like a beer or a soft drink?

Gleeson quickly moves over to the refrigerator-bar.

SONNY
Beer. Thanks.

Gleeson takes out a can of Tecate, a bowl of sliced limes and a saucer of rock salt and places them before Sonny at a table. He gets a can of soda pop for himself. They sit down.

GLEESON
This is a strong Mexican beer, but I think you'll like it. Have a nip of rock salt then a bit of beer then a bite of lime.

Sonny tosses some rock salt in his mouth, guns the whole beer then eats a slice of lime, peel and all, and belches.

SONNY
Not bad...Now, how old was she the first time you fucked her?

GLEESON
I'm afraid you've been hearing some gossip.

SONNY
Yeah.

GLEESON
I suppose I should feel complimented, most people take me for a faggot.

SONNY
Listen, Charlie, I don't give a damn about how many cherries you have notched on your bedpost or even if one of them belonged to Betty Sue Flowers. Better you with Brandenburg Concertos, candles and wine then some high school Harry in the backseat with a six-pack of Coors and two joints of home grown...

GLEESON
You flatter me.

Sonny crushes the beer can in his hand.

SONNY
I don't mean to.

GLEESON
Why don't you come off that tough guy act?

SONNY
Awful nice rings you got there. Okay if I take a look at them?

Gleeson puts his hand out and Sonny slams his fist down on it, crushing Gleeson's fingers into the tabletop...

SONNY
That was my tough guy act...

Gleeson tries to hide the pain but doesn't totally succeed.

SONNY
Now where were we, Charlie? Oh, yeah. You had something to tell me...maybe that you knocked her up.

Gleeson carefully nurses his hand.

GLEESON
All right. All right. I slept with her. She was about fifteen. But I didn't force her. Ever. She wanted to. She loved it. She was the best I ever had.

SONNY
Keep goin'...

GLEESON
And I didn't knock her up. I had a vasectomy years before I met Betty Sue. It wasn't mine. She had a stupid boyfriend...

SONNY
Albert Griffith...

GLEESON
Yeah. That's right. I didn't really know him.

SONNY
You're doing fine.

GLEESON
She told me she was pregnant and I gave her the name of a doctor in San Francisco. That's all. I thought she'd come right back...

SONNY
What's the doctor's name?

GLEESON
She didn't go to him. I tried to find her a week later. I called him and found out she'd never come in.

SONNY
Did you keep trying to find her?

GLEESON
I asked around, then I heard she was doing some porno movies. So I gave up on her. That's all I know. Really.

SONNY
You never spoke to her after she left?

GLEESON
No. Never...If you find her, will you call me?

SONNY
Why?

GLEESON
I'd like to know she's all right.

SONNY
You should have thought of that ten years ago.

GLEESON
Ten years ago I was still in my thirties, instead of working on fifty, and I had no idea that I was still going to be here in Santa Rosa, no idea that the best I'd ever get was going to be some small town girl...No idea at all ...I'd just like to see her, talk to her again.

SONNY
I won't find her.

GLEESON
But if you do...

SONNY
I'll let you know. Sorry about your fingers, thanks for the beer.

Sonny walks out.

INT. DANCE STUDIO 7

The dance floor has cleared. Linda is now alone at the barre. Crossing the room, Sonny pauses to admire her ballet positions.

SONNY
Waiting around for a private lesson?

She doesn't miss a beat.

LINDA
Fuck off.

He does.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAHEARNE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 8

Trahearne is sitting up in bed, reading; the bed next to him is unoccupied...Sonny enters carrying a stack of magazines.

TRAHEARNE
About time you got here.

SONNY
Didn't figure you were going anywhere.

TRAHEARNE
Goddamn, I hate hospitals. Always have. I spent the last ten months of the war sitting in a Naval hospital...

SONNY
Which war?

TRAHEARNE
<u>The</u> war.

Sonny dumps the magazines on the spare bed, pulls out a half-pint of vodka.

SONNY
You won't be here too long.

TRAHEARNE
Thank God that old woman didn't have a big bore pistol and thank God you brought the vodka.

Cont.

Before Trahearne can open the bottle, a tall pretty nurse named BEA enters...

BEA
Now, what's going on here? Oh, we'll have none of this, Mr. Trahearne. And shame on you, whoever you are.

SONNY
Sonny Sughrue, ma'am. Don't blame me. I'm just a hired hand.

BEA
Well, Mr. Trahearne can have this back when he checks out. You make him behave himself.

She plucks the bottle out of Trahearne's hands then briskly walks out.

SONNY
Yes, ma'am.

Sonny pulls out another bottle and hands it to Trahearne.

TRAHEARNE
My, God, boy, you may be worth all the money you're costing me ...Did that damned doctor say anything about releasing me?

He opens the vodka bottle and downs a third of its contents with several swallows.

SONNY
Three or four days.

TRAHEARNE
Shit. And I suppose you'll spend them chasing nurses and drinking whiskey at my expense.

SONNY
Ordinarily I would, but old Rosie out at the beer joint has got this runaway daughter she wants me to look for, just for a couple of days while you're laid up here.

TRAHEARNE
I know the whole story. I've been a steady patron for a couple of years...In fact, I told her to hire whoever came after me to look for her daughter, hoping that he'd be greedy and get off my ass...

8 Con

SONNY
Guess I qualify.

TRAHEARNE
Now, I want a favor, son, otherwise I might have to see to it that you don't get paid for finding me. Let's face it, you fucked up pretty bad getting me shot.

SONNY
What's the favor?

TRAHEARNE
Take me along.

SONNY
Can you stay sober?

TRAHEARNE
How sober?

SONNY
Sober as me.

TRAHEARNE
You can bet your shorts on that. Hell, we can even take that fucking barge I drive. I'll buy the gas and the whiskey...Lost women and desperate characters...I like an adventure.

SONNY
I'll think about it.

He turns and walks away.

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY 9

Sonny walks over to Bea who is busily filling out forms.

SONNY
Sorry about the trouble, ma'am. Why don't you let me make it up to you? What're you doing for dinner tonight?

She holds up her hand which has a wedding band on the third finger.

Cont.

BEA
Fixing it.

SONNY
Ain't that a crying shame.

CUT TO:

INT. SAN MATEO COURTHOUSE - DAY 10

Sonny stands in the corridor gazing through a windowpane at a court case in session. He is dressed, as usual, in Levis and a T-shirt.

The door swings open and people pour out. Sonny falls in step behind ALBERT GRIFFITH, a very well-dressed attorney carrying a Gucci briefcase. Sonny trails him out the door.

SONNY
Albert Griffith...

EXT. COURTHOUSE 11

Albert glances over his shoulder at Sonny but never loses a step.

ALBERT
I'm on my way to lunch. Whatcha got, drug bust or drunk driving?

SONNY
Those your specialties? You've got a big career going for yourself.

Albert stops, faces him.

ALBERT
There are plenty of lawyers in town. You won't have any trouble finding someone to help you.

SONNY
I don't think so. Unless they know Betty Sue Flowers...

ALBERT
Who are you?

SONNY
Friend of her momma's. She hired me to find her.

Cont.

ALBERT
That's a lost cause.

SONNY
I know. Let's talk about it.

EXT. COURTHOUSE PATIO 12

Sonny and Albert are seated at a table in a modern, utilitarian complex -- cement benches, tables, large plastic trash barrels, a row of food machines behind them and grafitti on the wall...Albert sips from a carton of milk.

ALBERT
I suppose I've never really gotten over her. I spent all my spare time for two years looking for Betty Sue. Nearly flunked out of law school. I'd drive over from Cal and just walk the streets. Never turned up a single lead. I even had a friend check her Social Security records in Washington. There weren't any payments since she'd disappeared. I figured she didn't want to be found or that she was dead. I checked the morgue every weekend. I must have seen a hundred Jane Does. Christ... it's been ten years and I still feel terrible about it...

SONNY
What about the abortion?

ALBERT
You know about that? Who told you?

SONNY
Gleeson.

ALBERT
That faggot...

SONNY
So what happened?

ALBERT
When?

SONNY
When you went for the abortion.

ALBERT
We never got there. We had a little time before and Betty Sue wanted to drive through Haight-Ashbury and see the hippies. We got stuck in a line of traffic, and she just opened the door and walked away...never said a word, never looked back.

SONNY
You didn't go after her?

ALBERT
How could I? I didn't know she was running away, and I just couldn't leave my car sitting in the street and chase after her...Sure, now I wish I had. Maybe things would have turned out different.

SONNY
Never know, do you?

ALBERT
You think there's any chance you might find her?

SONNY
I've got nothing to go on and it's been ten years.

He shrugs.

ALBERT
Listen, would you do me a favor?

SONNY
You want me to let you know if I find her.

ALBERT
Please. I'd be willing to pay your usual rates plus a bonus.

SONNY
No way.

ALBERT
Why not?

SONNY
Let me tell you a story...My father left my mother down in Texas right after he came back from the war. He drifted around, moving every year. He was a crazy son of a bitch, had this notion he was a Kwahadi Comanche, wore his hair braided...the whole number. Well, one summer he was working a ranch outside of Chugwater, Wyoming, and I spent a couple of months with him. He sent me on this vision quest. Sat my ass on a chalk bluff up over Sybille Creek and I spent three days sitting there cross-legged. No food, no water, no sleep...And let me tell you, I had some fucking visions.

ALBERT
I don't understand what you're telling me.

SONNY
I'll tell you what I'm telling you ...I still have visions. And I just had one while you were whining about all the Jane Does under all those rubber sheets.

ALBERT
A vision?

SONNY
Right. Every time you lifted a sheet you were hoping it was her lying there dead.

Pause.

ALBERT
You're right...This thing fucked up my life. It still does.

SONNY
You should have chased her down that street.

WH

CUT TO:

INT. TRAHEARNE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT 13

Sonny opens the door, casting a bright sliver of light into the pitch black room.
Bea giggles as he leads her inside; both are very drunk.

BEA
I thought we were going to your motel.

SONNY
Haven't bothered to check into one. Besides, we both have to be here in the morning anyway.

He kisses her, maneuvering her toward the empty bed.

BEA
Not with him sleeping right in the next bed.

SONNY
Don't worry about him. The old drunk sleeps like a rock. And there's one other thing...I don't know if I should tell you...

BEA
What?

SONNY
Well, the old man can't get it up any more. Whiskey and war wounds. But he really likes to sleep right next to it while it's happening.

BEA
You're kidding.

SONNY
He claims that the force of the sexual emanations give him wonderful dreams. That's about the only pleasure left for him in life.

BEA
Oh, God...

SONNY
And, you never know. He might have a good dream tonight and write a story about it tomorrow. I'll make him dedicate it to you.

TRAHEARNE 14

lying there with both eyes open, listening to every word; he doesn't have the look of a happy man.

SONNY AND BEA 15

Sonny pulls the curtain around Trahearne's bed.

BEA
You really think he might do that?

SONNY
I think I can arrange it.

Sonny closes the curtain around their bed.

BEA
(voice over)
You do this sort of chore for him often?

SONNY
(voice over)
Not nearly often enough.

INT. TRAHEARNE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING 16

Bea is making her early rounds...She pulls the curtain away from Trahearne's bed.
The curtain is still drawn around the bed where Sonny is sleeping.

BEA
Good morning, Mr. Trahearne.

TRAHEARNE
My dear, I'm certain that my faithful Indian companion there was terribly indiscreet last night, that he spoke to you of matters most private, matters too sensitive to discuss in the light of day, matters I would consider it a personal favor if you mentioned to no living soul...

BEA
Oh, I'd die before I'd say a word, Mr. Trahearne.

TRAHEARNE
Please call me Abraham. I consider myself in your debt, my dear.

BEA
Sonny -- Mr. Sughrue says you'll autograph one of your books for me.

TRAHEARNE
It would be an honor.

She hurries out to get the book.

TRAHEARNE
What a routine, Sonny. I thought I'd heard them all, but sexual emanations and erotic dreams for the poor, impotent man...Where did you come up with that?

Sonny pushes his curtain aside and begins to dress.

SONNY
You don't think she bought that crap, do you?

TRAHEARNE
Women love that sort of lie. They love the role of helpmate. That's where they get their power over us...Their victory in defeat, their ascendency in submission.

SONNY
Should I be writing this down?

TRAHEARNE
Envy, my young friend, is such a mean, small emotion. Did you hear me envy your lady friend's inspired thrashing last night?

SONNY
I heard you breathing hard. Does that count?

Bea returns clutching a paperback with a torn cover.

TRAHEARNE
To Bea...or not to Bea...

She giggles as he inscribes the book.

BEA
Oh, thank you.

TRAHEARNE
My dear, you've restored my faith in human nature. You're simply too kind to an old, sick man.

She kisses his cheek.

BEA
You're more than welcome, Mr. Trahearne...You're also a terrible old fraud.

She slips her hand under the covers and gives him a grope.

BEA
Gotcha. See, there's signs of life in the little guy yet.

She giggles and sweeps out of the room.

TRAHEARNE
Little guy...

Gets a smile from Sonny.

TRAHEARNE
If I had known how much fun we were going to have, Sonny, I would have let you catch up with me sooner. What's next?

SONNY
I have to go into San Francisco to look at some dirty movies.

TRAHEARNE
Goddamn, that's for me.

Trahearne gets out of bed, limps over to closet and takes his rumpled pants off a hanger.

SONNY
Hey, what're you doing? You can't just walk out of here.

TRAHEARNE
Watch me...I'm sick of this Goddamn hospital, and I want to play detective.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSIE'S - DAY 17

Trahearne is trying to coax Fireball off the front seat of his convertible...Sonny leans on car, swigging a beer.

TRAHEARNE
Goddamned dog.

Rosie walks over happily.

ROSIE
You might as well take him with you. He'll enjoy the ride and might help keep you boys out of trouble.

TRAHEARNE
I hope not.

Sonny picks up an old hubcap, pours it full of beer and puts it on the floor of the backseat. Fireball climbs over to the backseat and begins lapping it up.

Sonny and Trahearne get it, and Sonny starts the engine.

TRAHEARNE
Lost women and desperate characters.

Rosie waves as they pull out.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAY 18

They drive across, Fireball sitting up in the middle of the backseat like a pagan god.

TRAHEARNE
What a fucking lark. Experiencing the great American vista with a drunken bulldog and a seedy private dick.

SONNY
It's your money, old man.

TRAHEARNE
Stop calling me old man.

SONNY
Stop calling me a seedy dick.

They drive on.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHTER'S FILM EXCHANGE - NIGHT 19

SID RICHTER is a tall, gaunt man, dressed in a mismatched suit coat and pants. He paces the aisleway between racks of film cans, thumbing through a metal box of index cards.

Sonny and Trahearne stand nearby.

RICHTER
Here's a Lizzie Flowers. Could that be her? I have a list of four titles for her.

SONNY
You have any of them?

RICHTER
One. 'Secrets of the Flower Children.'

TRAHEARNE
Sounds terribly innocent, doesn't it?

Richter leads them away.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - NIGHT 20

A large movie screen dominates the small room which is littered with film cans and empty reels.
Rows of Ginzbergs are numbered and arranged in bookcases lining the walls...
As Richter threads the projector, Trahearne pulls out a pocket flask.
The lights suddenly go dim and the projector begins to whirr...

RICHTER
As you can see, this is a rather amateur effort, probably made in the late sixties with non-actors. It's not a very good example of the product of that period. The director has no real style...

Sonny and Trahearne watch impassively as grunts and groans begin on the sound track.

RICHTER
There's no story line, mostly just a lot of fucking. I think that's the lead actress, twenty pounds too fat and a scar on her belly. This is a pretty poor print, too.

Cont.

He lights a cigarette.

TRAHEARNE
What are you doing with all this stuff?

RICHTER
A book. Humor in the American Pornographic Film.

TRAHEARNE
You think you can get a publisher interested in that?

RICHTER
Already got a $25,000 advance.

TRAHEARNE
Shit.

Trahearne rises and ambles out the door.

RICHTER
Who the hell is that?

SONNY
A jealous writer. Where'd you get this film?

RICHTER
Dealer named Jack Krebbs.

SONNY
Where can I get ahold of him?

RICHTER
No idea. He left town five or six years ago. Might not even be in the business any more.

SONNY
Could you ask around for me?

RICHTER
Sure. But I don't have too many contacts outside the city and I'm really busy with the book and all...

SONNY
Look, Sid. This is kind of important to me.

He hands Sid a card and a $100 bill.

20 Cont

Sid exhales, sending the smoke swirling into the projector light, then looks back at the screen.

RICHTER
This sure isn't one of the funny ones...

EXT. CADDY - NIGHT 21

Trahearne sits in the driver's seat, wrapped in a blanket, drinking. Fireball snoozes in the backseat. Sonny climbs in.

SONNY
Hey, I'll drive.

TRAHEARNE
My turn. Who we going to see now?

SONNY
Lady named Peggy Bain over in Tiburon.

Trahearne starts the engine and plows into the car parked behind them. He tugs at wheel and guns forward, clipping the rear fender of the car parked in front, then darts out into traffic without batting an eye.

TRAHEARNE
Bet you thought I couldn't handle this blimp. Now... where the hell's Tiburon?

SONNY
Get on the freeway. And quit taking being a man of action so seriously.

Sonny sinks down in his seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. TIBURON MARINA - NIGHT 22

A raucous yacht party spills onto the dock area. Sonny and Trahearne work their way past several elegantly-dressed drunks. Sonny looks over at the rumpled Trahearne.

SONNY
Maybe you ought to stay in the car, you ain't lookin' real sharp...I won't be long.

Cont.

WH

TRAHEARNE
Bullshit. I'm a world famous novelist. I'm always welcome at parties.

SONNY
At least the goddamn bulldog had the decency to pass out.

TRAHEARNE
Sticks and stones, boy. Sticks and stones.

They walk on board.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT 23

Sonny stands across from PEGGY BAIN, an attractive young woman in a simple Halston gown.

SONNY
...So Albert gave me your address and here I am.

TRAHEARNE
Here we are.

Trahearne casually drapes his arm around Peggy.

PEGGY
Do you see that blonde lady over there with all the gold chains around her neck? She's really into writing. I know she'd love to talk to you.

TRAHEARNE
Excuse me.

He ambles away.

PEGGY
Is he always like that?

SONNY
Just around women. He thinks famous writers should be able to get fucked whenever they want...

PEGGY
Good. So does Gladys.

SONNY
Gladys?

PEGGY
The lady with the chains...My mother-in-law...So you've talked to Rosie and Albert...

SONNY
And Mr. Gleeson, teenage ballet coach.

PEGGY
God I haven't thought about him in years.

SONNY
You don't have to start now...

PEGGY
I've thought about Betty Sue though...Hey, have you talked to her father?

SONNY
No. Do you know where he is?

PEGGY
Bakersfield. Runs a hick club, sings with his own band. I was actually there once. Many years ago, needless to say.

SONNY
Remember what it's called?

PEGGY
The Kicker. Short for Shit-kicker from the look of it...I asked him if he ever heard from Betty Sue. Said he'd had a call from her once from some ranch up north. This has got to be about five years ago by now.

SONNY
Did he say what she'd said?

PEGGY
No. Hey, ever think that maybe Betty Sue doesn't want to be found?

SONNY
Sure, I've thought about it.

PEGGY
And?

SONNY
If she'd hired me, I'd help her hide. She didn't hire me though. Her momma did.

PEGGY
And you do whatever they hire you for?

SONNY
As long as I can stand it.

PEGGY
And what can't you stand?

SONNY
Guess I haven't found out yet... Tell me about her.

PEGGY
What do you want to know?

SONNY
Everything.

PEGGY
Betty Sue was my best friend all through school. She was beautiful and funny...talented...I think she could do anything she wanted to do. But the thing she did best was make people fall in love with her. Even when she didn't mean to. And that was the one thing she couldn't handle...Scared her, I guess.

SONNY
Sounds like you knew her pretty well.

PEGGY
Yeah...she was special. If she walked across the deck right now, in a few minutes, you'd be standing in line trying to get at her. So would I. Ten years ...Jesus Christ, I hope you find her.

Pause.

SONNY
I didn't mean to stir up any bad memories.

Cont.

23 Cont

PEGGY
When she and I were in school, we may as well have been living in the Ozarks, the kind of life we both had. I was lucky. I got married, moved to San Francisco, got divorced and married a better one...I hope she's okay...

SONNY
So do I.

EXT. MARINA CAR PARK - NIGHT 24

Sonny walks rapidly toward the Caddie; Trahearne struggles to keep up.

TRAHEARNE
Jesus Christ. What's your hurry? I was getting along fine.

SONNY
I noticed.

TRAHEARNE
Where we going?

SONNY
Bakersfield.

TRAHEARNE
Bakersfield? What for?

SONNY
How do you like Hank Williams?

TRAHEARNE
At dawn? I hate him.

SONNY
Too bad.

They climb into the car, rousing a sleepy Fireball; He snorts and refuses to budge from the front seat...The two men elbow their way in, forcing Fireball to sit up between them as Sonny starts the engine and pulls out onto the highway.

TRAHEARNE
Well, now that you got out here and woke up my friend, how about a drink before breakfast?

Cont.

Trahearne gropes into a sack at his feet. He lifts a half gallon bottle of vodka to his lips, swigs, then follows it with a gulp from a small bottle of tonic water.

SONNY
I don't think that's how you make a vodka tonic.

TRAHEARNE
You're going to a lot of trouble over this girl.

SONNY
Storing up my treasures in heaven. Besides Rosie's promised me free beer for a month the next time I'm up in Sonoma.

TRAHEARNE
Don't kid me. You've got a thing about finding this Betty Sue Flowers.

Sonny stares ahead at the road as Trahearne takes another belt...

TRAHEARNE
...You know, I was one hell of a combat officer.

SONNY
Your ex-wife showed me a picture of you in uniform with all your medals.

TRAHEARNE
Ah, that's all shit...You ever in the service?

SONNY
Yeah. I forgot to burn my draft card.

TRAHEARNE
Then you know what it's really like.

SONNY
Yeah. I know. Wasn't over there very long...

TRAHEARNE
Wounded?

SONNY
Nope. I just made a mistake.

TRAHEARNE
That doesn't sound like my drinking buddy...What kind of mistake?

SONNY
We were on a search and destroy south of An Khe and we drew fire from a shithole called Plei Bao Three. We were working through the village, blowing hooches, and I blew the wrong one. It was full of kids and old people.

TRAHEARNE
For that kind of shit they put you in Levenworth.

SONNY
They did...Then they let me out on a technicality. One condition, I go to work for the Army, spying on radical groups at Berkeley.

TRAHEARNE
Jesus. You did that?

SONNY
I was looking at twenty years behind bars before I had a chance to apply for parole...I'm not proud of it, but I did it.

TRAHEARNE
Caught you between the rock and the hard place.

Trahearne takes another drink.

TRAHEARNE
I think it's over for me, Sonny. None of it's fun anymore. Sometimes I think I've had the last good drink out of the bottle, the last good kiss and the last laugh, but it wasn't very funny.

SONNY
You know what I think?

TRAHEARNE
Tell me...

SONNY
You're full of shit.

CUT TO:

INT. KICKER KORRAL - DAY 25

A banner above the bandstand reads: Jimmie Joe Flowers and his Pickers.

A big, burly BARTENDER silently polishes glasses... The bar is empty except for Sonny, Trahearne, JIMMIE JOE FLOWERS, a seedy-looking Western entertainer, and MYRNA, an overly made up sex kitten in a garish outfit similar to his.
One further occupant...a big, beefy redneck BOUNCER who wears a straw cowboy hat.

SONNY
You don't remember the place?

JIMMIE JOE
Yeah, I remember. She said it was somewheres around Grass Valley.

SONNY
Why'd she call?

JIMMIE JOE
Ain't easy for me to tell ya that, mister...I never thought no child of mine would turn out to be a hippie, you know, never thought it for a minute. I mean, what the hell, I like to see kids have a good time, but they got to work for it, and you know, I lost a boy over there in Vietnam, and here I turn around and find this damned hippie for a daughter. I mean, you know, first I hear she's run off without finishing school...

SONNY
We all know how important an education is nowadays...

JIMMIE JOE
Right...and here I am her own father, you know, and I don't hear a single solitary word from her for four, maybe five years, then one night she calls, collect, and wakes me out of a dead sleep...

He looks at Myrna.

Cont.

JIMMIE JOE
You remember that, don't you, honey? And you know what she wants? Money, by God, she wants money so she can leave that damned dirty commune where she's been shacked up like some animal. And you know what I told her?

SONNY
What did you tell her, Mr. Flowers?

JIMMIE JOE
I told her that I hadn't sent her a single thin dime to get herself into trouble, and I wasn't going to send a single thin dime to get her out. Not by a damned sight I wasn't, ya know what I mean?

SONNY
You sound like a wonderful father.

JIMMIE JOE
I did my best.

SONNY
And you don't look a fucking bit like Hank Williams.

JIMMIE JOE
How'd you like your legs busted, buddy.

SONNY
You'd need plenty of help.

JIMMIE JOE
I got that.

MYRNA
Don't get riled up, Jimmie Joe. Remember your heart.

SONNY
Yeah, your big ol' heart...

Sonny turns to Trahearne.

SONNY
Come on.

They get up and start out.
The Straw-Hatted Bouncer throws a bar stool down on the floor in front of Sonny and Trahearne.

SONNY
You tryin' to send some kind of message.

Straw Hat looks back at Jimmie Joe.

STRAW HAT
You want me to close that big mouth of his?

Straw Hat is standing between Sonny, Trahearne and the door...he's a good half a head taller than Sonny.

TRAHEARNE
You dumb ass peckerwood, get the fuck out of our way before I show you what five generations of real bar fighters have bred into me...

Straw Hat is still looking back at Jimmie Joe, paying no attention to Trahearne.

JIMMIE JOE
Myrna, why don't you put a song on the jukebox...somethin' lively.

Sonny looks over at the smiling Trahearne.

SONNY
I don't think you said the right thing, old man.

Myrna drops a quarter and the bar is filled with the loud, raucous sounds of a country-western song.

As Sonny looks back toward Straw Hat, he suddenly hits the big man a right hand, full in the face.
Sonny gets a jolting blow back from Straw Hat...
Trahearne goes back to his beer at the bar, still smiling...
Sonny lands another punch.
Gets one back and goes down.
Straw Hat steps over, tries to kick Sonny...
Sonny grabs his foot, twists...
Straw Hat comes down on top of him.
Sonny's arm locks around Straw Hat's throat.
Straw Hat's head jerks back, the pressure tightens...
Straw Hat hits Sonny three times in the face, breaks free.
Both men scramble to their feet.
Straw Hat swings, connects.
Sonny delivers a left to the stomach and a right to the head.
Straw Hat steps back, looks at Sonny, charges.
Sonny stops Straw Hat's rush with a punch, but is bowled over at impact.
Straw Hat kicks Sonny, trips, falls.
Sonny hammers his left against Straw Hat's head, a club-like blow.

Cont.

25 Cont

Straw Hat answers with a punch.
Both men on their knees.
They look at one another.
Silently move to their feet.
Straw Hat wades in, arms windmilling.
Sonny responds blow for blow.
Each arm weary...
Finally Sonny steps back...his breath coming in bellows-like heaves...
Arms at his sides, clearly beaten by the bigger man...
As Straw Hat closes in for the finish, Trahearne suddenly kicks Straw Hat in the balls, dropping him.
Then breaks a bar chair over his head.
Straw Hat lies there in a daze.

TRAHEARNE
You ready.

SONNY
Any time.

Trahearne looks back at Jimmie Joe.
Smiles.

EXT. KICKER KORRAL PARKING LOT - DAY 26

Sonny slams the door as he gets in and finds Fireball contentedly snoozing in the driver's seat.

SONNY
I've had about enough of this...

He grabs the dog roughly and plops him into the backseat.
Trahearne climbs in. A moment of silence.

TRAHEARNE
I've got to give you a little more credit than I have up to now. You really know how to show a man a good time.

SONNY
You know if you'd of kept your mouth shut, I might have got us out of there without me getting my ass kicked.

TRAHEARNE
Don't poor mouth a great victory. We need to celebrate.

Sonny socks the Cadillac into gear.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE, ST. FRANCIS - NIGHT 27

It's cluttered with the remains of a long party; empty whiskey bottles and beer cans everywhere, overflowing ashtrays and a NAKED WOMAN in red boots sleeping on the couch.

Fireball, now wearing a glittering rhinestone collar, is zonked out on an arm chair.

Trahearne looks mellow and sober compared to the giddy, red-eyed Sonny sitting beside him.

TRAHEARNE
What a fucking lark. Lost women and...

SONNY
...desperate characters, and it's starting to be a pretty expensive lark.

TRAHEARNE
Worth every penny. I would have spent it all just to see that lady walk across the room...Wonderful. Naked ladies, by God, I love them. I've seen a horde of them in my time, but I can't get used to it. Pop the cork on that other bottle and let's drink to naked ladies.

Sonny opens a champagne bottle, bouncing the cork off the ceiling and covering his hand with froth. He fills their glasses.

TRAHEARNE
...Funny.

SONNY
What?

TRAHEARNE
I just realized how I came by my taste for nude women...

SONNY
I hope you don't think you're the only man suffering from that problem.

TRAHEARNE
It all started when I was eleven or twelve...

Cont.

SONNY
Sounds like a two bottle problem.

He moves to the bar and returns with a new bottle.

SONNY
Okay. Go on.

TRAHEARNE
I used to walk home from school through the alleys of Seattle so I could talk to the sailors and loggers, the people I used to read about in Jack London books. One day it was raining and I saw a woman standing naked in front of her window. She stood there like she thought she was invisible. She stared out into the cold rain holding her breasts and smiling. I used to dream about her. And on rainy days I'd go back to that alley and wait for her to appear again.

SONNY
Ever find out who she was?

TRAHEARNE
We moved away. I grew up. The war came. Before I knew it I was a Marine with gleaming gold bars waiting to be shipped out of San Francisco. I'd never been there before. Then one afternoon I walked to the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge and saw a lovely young girl dressed in black. Still in her teens and a widow. I was afraid she'd come there to jump; she said she'd come to throw her wedding ring into the Bay. We talked for a long time. I knew I'd never see her again. Hell, I might never come back. I guess that's why. I told her about the naked woman in the rain. Well, right there in the sunlight she undid her blouse and showed me her tits...It was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to me. And maybe still is...I don't know...

SONNY
What happened to her?

TRAHEARNE
The war happened, that's what. I don't suppose you remember much about that.

SONNY
I remember my daddy went away then he came back and went away for good.

TRAHEARNE
Killed?

SONNY
No. After seeing North Africa, Italy and France, he figured Texas didn't look like much. He headed West and my mother and I stayed home. She said the war just gave him an excuse to be as worthless and shiftless as he always wanted to be.

TRAHEARNE
Women are like that. They don't understand moving on. Give 'em a warm cave and a steady supply of antelope meat and they're home for good.

SONNY
What happened to the woman?

TRAHEARNE
What woman?

SONNY
The one with the tits.

TRAHEARNE
Trouble with you is there's no poetry in you. Just a callous soul and a smart mouth.

SONNY
Never claimed otherwise. What happened to the woman?

Cont.

TRAHEARNE
Hell, I don't know. Married a 4-F or an officer with a longer leave than mine. What difference does it make? It's the story that counts.

SONNY
Not until I know how it ends.

TRAHEARNE
Stories are like snapshots... pictures with clean, hard edges. But this was life, and life always begins and ends in a muddle, womb to tomb, just one big mess, a can of worms left to rot in the sun.

SONNY
Right.

Fireball rolls off the chair with a loud crash, shakes himself and waddles over to the bathroom; Trahearne limps along after him...
SOUND of lapping water.

TRAHEARNE
(voice over)
Goddamn it, dog, get out of the way.

SOUND of pissing.

TRAHEARNE
(voice over)
Maybe it's time to head for home. I think the fun's over for awhile.

SONNY
Home is where you hang your hangover.

TRAHEARNE
(voice over)
At least back at my place, I won't have to listen to your piss-ant redneck homilies...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSIE'S TRAILER - EARLY MORNING 28

An old-fashioned large silver trailer attached to the back of the beer hall.

Sonny knocks on the door; Fireball at his feet, still wearing the rhinestone collar...
Rosie pulls open the screen wearing a faded bathrobe, her hair badly tousled.

ROSIE
No luck, huh?

SONNY
I told you there wasn't much of a chance. Here's your money back.

ROSIE
You keep it, Sonny. I'm damn sure you earned it.

SONNY
I wish you'd take it back.

ROSIE
You keep it...

She looks down at Fireball.

ROSIE
What the hell is that around his neck?

SONNY
A genuine rhinestone collar.

ROSIE
You boys been on a toot, huh?

SONNY
About all the fun a man could handle.

Rosie steps out and they walk around to the parking lot. Fireball waddles along behind Sonny.

The Caddie's fender is badly bashed; Sonny begins hooking it up to his El Camino with a tow bar.

ROSIE
Must be nice to be able to hire somebody to haul you and your big car around.

Cont.

SONNY
It's been so long since I got hired, I can barely remember who I'm working for.

ROSIE
Well, I thank you for working for me.

SONNY
Have you ever thought about maybe Betty Sue not wanting to be found...or that maybe she's dead.

ROSIE
I'm her mother, Sonny, and I'd know if she was dead... I'd know in here.

She puts her hand over her heart.

SONNY
Why do you think she ran away?

ROSIE
For a long time I blamed myself, but I don't now.

SONNY
What for?

ROSIE
One time after I divorced Jimmie Joe, Betty Sue found me in bed with a man. She took it pretty hard, but I don't think that's why she run off...Sometimes I used to think she run off because she thought she was too good to live behind a beer joint.

SONNY
Did the two of you have a fight before she left?

ROSIE
We didn't have fights. Nothin' to fight about. Betty Sue did as she pleased ever since she was a little girl.

SONNY
Maybe she was pregnant.

ROSIE
I don't think she would have run away for that. But then, I don't know. We weren't close...She always wanted more than we had. She never said anything, but I could tell she wanted more. I just never knew what it was she wanted more of. If you'd of found her, maybe now she'd tell me.

SONNY
Sorry I couldn't help.

Sonny climbs in and starts the El Camino.

ROSIE
You take care now. Good-bye.

Trahearne sits up, half-awake, and opens his door.

TRAHEARNE
What the living hell are you doing?

SONNY
Saving you some gas.

TRAHEARNE
What?

SONNY
You're not fit to drive, old man.

TRAHEARNE
That's the truth...

As Trahearne closes his door, Fireball hops in, slithers over and stretches out on the driver's seat. Trahearne yawns and goes back to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE, SHASTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT 29

The El Camino-Caddie pulls up in front of the house. Sonny goes to help Trahearne out and sees Fireball.

SONNY
Goddamn it.

TRAHEARNE
A stowaway...

SONNY
Why'd you let him get in the car?

TRAHEARNE
I didn't let him in. I was asleep.

SONNY
Well, he sure as hell didn't climb in by himself.

TRAHEARNE
Never know. This dog's an adventurer. Don't worry about it. You can drop him back later. Come on in. Let's have a homecoming drink.

SONNY
If there's going to be a big domestic scene, I'd just as soon piss off.

TRAHEARNE
Don't worry. Melinda's a saint. She forgives me even before I transgress.

He looks at the house and gives a shout...

TRAHEARNE
Whiskey, woman!

MELINDA, a very attractive woman in her late twenties, appears in the doorway.

MELINDA
In which order?

She comes over and embraces him.

Trahearne turns to Sonny.

TRAHEARNE
Come on, redneck. Let's head for the trough.

INT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE - NIGHT 30

In doorway, Trahearne and Melinda stop and kiss. Sonny heads over to the bar. Fireball at his heels.

Trahearne grabs a whiskey bottle and sinks into a large leather chair.

MELINDA
Drink?

SONNY
Beer might be tasty. Cut right through all that road dust.

She fetches a can from the bar fridge, pops it open and hands it to him.

MELINDA
I'm afraid my husband doesn't have much social grace...I'm Melinda Trahearne.

SONNY
Sonny Sughrue, ma'am.

MELINDA
I know. Trahearne phoned me from the hospital. He seems fond of you.

TRAHEARNE
That's bullshit.

MELINDA
He usually hates it whenever Katherine sicks one of you people on him. He says you're different...I hope we'll all be friends.

TRAHEARNE
This conversation's making me sick. I'm going to bed and leave you two to fall in love.

Trahearne lumbers out of the room.

MELINDA
Can I get something for your dog?

She crosses over to Sonny, sipping a brandy, and sits down.

SONNY
Not my dog.

MELINDA
Who's is it?

SONNY
Belongs to a lady named Rosie who runs a beer hall over in Sonoma. He's a pain in the neck.

She leans down and scratches Fireball's ears.

MELINDA
I think he's sweet...

Pause.

MELINDA
How is Trahearne really? Hip healing okay?

SONNY
Fine. He hardly limps at all.

MELINDA
How'd it happen?

SONNY
Hmm?

MELINDA
The car crash. He was a little drunk when he called so I didn't get the story very well.

SONNY
Oh, right...Ran into a cable car.

MELINDA
But how did he hurt his hip?

SONNY
Oh, it's quite a story. I'm sure he'll want to tell you himself. You know how he loves stories.

MELINDA
Yes. Yes, I certainly do... you're not leaving, are you? It's awfully late and you must be exhausted. You're welcome to stay here.

Cont.

30 Cont

SONNY
Thanks for the offer, but...

MELINDA
I know Trahearne would be pleased. We have scads of room, you know. The guest quarters are completely private. There's a kitchen and everything. And we're very informal. You can come and go as you like.

SONNY
Thank you, ma'am. I'm sold.

MELINDA
Good. I'll show you where your room is, and if you call me 'ma'am' again, I'll have to knock you on your ass.

SONNY
I suppose I could break down and call you Miz Melinda...

She leads him through the house to the back. The bright pool lights glow through the windows overlooking the patio. She flips them off as they pass.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT 31

The large area has been transformed into a stylish one bedroom suite.

MELINDA
Just yell if you need anything. We're usually up late.

SONNY
Thanks.

MELINDA
Good night.

SONNY
'Night.

Cont.

31 Cont

She leaves and he wanders across room, past a wet-bar/ kitchen through the bedroom and into the bathroom. He switches on the light and stares at his whiskeyworn features in the mirror.

SONNY
Jesus.

He splashes water on his face; as he towels off, a ceramic vase on the counter catches his eye. He picks it up; the design is a series of women's faces, hands over eyes with long, tangled hair...signature: M. Trahearne.

Loud voices from upstairs break the mood; the sounds of an argument...a door slams.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE - MORNING 32

Sonny sits staring into the pool as Melinda jogs up the driveway and onto the patio. Fireball trots along behind her.

MELINDA
'Morning. Wnat to go in for a swim?

SONNY
I've had my exercise for the day watching you take that hill.

MELINDA
How about some coffee then?

SONNY
Like to, but at ten o'clock I have to go over to settle up with, um, my employer...

MELINDA
You mean the ex-Mrs. Trahearne.

SONNY
I mean the ex-Mrs. Trahearne.

Smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. KATHERINE TRAHEARNE'S HOUSE - DAY 33

EDNA TRAHEARNE, a fierce old woman in her seventies, sits on the porch, clasping a cane between her knees. She is dressed in well-worn, fashionable hunting clothes.

Sonny approaches the porch.

SONNY
Good morning, ma'am. I'm C.W. Sughrue. Folks call me Sonny.

No response.

SONNY
Katherine Trahearne in?

EDNA
Don't see her anywhere.

SONNY
She's expecting me.

EDNA
Then she'll probably be along in a minute.

She looks Sonny over.

EDNA
I told Katherine that Trahearne would come home when he was good and ready. Waste of time hiring someone to look for him.

SONNY
Guess she felt different about it.

EDNA
Waste of time and money. He's not worth it. A fifty-seven-year-old bar-hopping bum, that's all he is now...I never could see why she makes excuses for him...

SONNY
I wouldn't know, ma'am.

A gleaming silver Porsche 911S roars into the driveway and KATHERINE TRAHEARNE hops out. She is a trim, tanned, beautiful woman of forty, dressed in tennis whites.

KATHERINE
Hello. Sorry I'm late.

Cont.

She bounds onto the porch, smiling at Sonny.

KATHERINE
Trahearne phoned me last night so I guess you tracked him down all right.

SONNY
Yes, ma'am. I have a few receipts and things for you.

Edna harrumps.
Katherine ignores it.

KATHERINE
You were gone a little longer than I expected...Come on in.

INT. KATHERINE TRAHEARNE'S HOUSE - DAY 34

Sonny enters the living room. Prominently displayed on the mantlepiece are photos of Trahearne in uniform and his wedding photo with a very young Katherine.

SONNY
Your mother doesn't seem to think much of Trahearne. She called him a bum.

KATHERINE
That's not my mother. Edna's his mother...And she's not too fond of him despite the fact he's an only child. Trahearne is a hard man to like...Where did you find him?

SONNY
One of the bars on the list you gave me.

KATHERINE
Which one?

SONNY
Rosie's Paradise. Sonoma, California.

KATHERINE
Christ. Someday he's going to tie one on and there won't be anybody around to undo the knot. Those binges are going to kill him. I don't know what that slut he lives with does to him.

Sonny shifts uncomfortably.

KATHERINE
You don't agree.

SONNY
I don't know. She seems to like him. At least she gives that impression. Maybe she even loves him...

KATHERINE
He doesn't need love. It confuses him. He needs tending like a child. He's an artist and artists are children...I'd better stop or you'll think I'm just a vindictive ex-wife.

SONNY
I wouldn't know, ma'am.

He withdraws an envelope of receipts from his pocket.

KATHERINE
Well, guess I owe you some money.

He hands her the envelope.

KATHERINE
Could you meet me a little later today? We'll settle up and go over the rest of our business.

SONNY
Sure. I guess.

KATHERINE
I'm lunching out at the Thunderbird. Why don't you meet me afterward, say two o'clock in the bar?

SONNY
Sounds okay. Also sounds like I don't have much of a choice.

CUT TO:

INT. THUNDERBIRD COCKTAIL LOUNGE - DAY 35

Katherine and Sonny sit in a booth, drinks in front of them. She passes a manila banking envelope to him.

KATHERINE
I thought you'd prefer cash. It's all there...$2,600.00

SONNY
Thank you, ma'am.

He pockets the envelope.

KATHERINE
I've looked over your accounting, but part of the fun of playing this game with Trahearne is finding out where he went and what he did. I'd like a detailed verbal report.

SONNY
Anything else?

KATHERINE
Yes.

She puts her hand on his.

KATHERINE
You.

CUT TO:

INT. THUNDERBIRD MOTEL - NIGHT 36

Sonny and Katherine in bed, having another drink and a cigarette. Neither of them seems to be dressed.

KATHERINE
...I thought detectives were endlessly curious.

SONNY
I was taught that it's bad manners to pry.

KATHERINE
I never talk to anyone about myself or about Trahearne. But since you haven't asked, I feel somehow obliged to tell you.

SONNY
My old Chinese interrogation tactic.

Cont.

KATHERINE
Very effective. Well, we met ten years after the war. I was only eighteen but had already been married. Trahearne usually tells people it was during the war and that I was a widow. Anyway, I was alone in San Francisco...

SONNY
You're the woman on the Bridge.

KATHERINE
Oh, he told you that silly story, too. He tells everybody he gets drunk with that story.

SONNY
The story's bullshit?

KATHERINE
No, it's all true. It's just silly.

SONNY
I wonder who the woman in the window was.

KATHERINE
His mother, of course.

SONNY
That's why I'm not curious... I find out too many things I don't want to know.

CUT TO:

INT. EL CAMINO - NIGHT 37

Katherine lights a cigarette, stares ahead, broodingly; Sonny at the wheel, the vehicle gliding down the highway.

KATHERINE
...For a long time I was a very faithful wife with a very unfaithful husband. I don't think I minded his whoring nearly as much as his guilty rages afterwards. But I forgave him his women, his drunkeness,

Cont.

37 Cont.

KATHERINE (Cont.)
his childishness because I always believed in his work. And I helped him. Believe me, he wouldn't have written those books without my help. Then one day two years ago, he asked for a divorce. Now he has a wife who goes out and fucks a lot more than he does or ever did, so now he doesn't have to feel guilty anymore.

SONNY
Do you want him back?

KATHERINE
I'll get him back one of these days. But until I do, I intend to have some of his sort of fun.

SONNY
Doesn't sound like either one of you are having a lot of fun.

She moves closer to him.

KATHERINE
No reason to stop trying...

EXT. MARKET PARKING LOT 38

Sonny pulls to a stop. He opens her door and walks her over to her Porsche, the only car left in the lot.

KATHERINE
You're a special guy...not the usual hero type.

SONNY
You don't have to say anything.

KATHERINE
I want to.

She smiles.

KATHERINE
You're not afraid of women. You actually seem to like them better than horses.

Cont.

38 Cont.

SONNY
I like almost everything better than horses.

She hugs him briefly, then climbs into the car. Sonny watches her roar away, then walks across the lot to a telephone booth.

INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH 39

He fumbles with receiver, getting out a pen. No paper. He jots on a page of the phone book.

SONNY
Honey, repeat that San Francisco number. Okay, got it. Any other messages?...Thanks.

He hangs up, dials another number.

SONNY
Sid, Sonny. Just got your message...Okay...Know the name of the company? Okay...Krebbs doesn't know I'm coming, does he?

CUT TO:

INT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE - DAY 40

Sonny moves swiftly through hall carrying his duffel bag. He pauses, pokes his head into the study where Trahearne is typing. He looks up.

SONNY
Just wanted to say good-bye... and thanks.

TRAHEARNE
Good-bye...

Indifference, almost hostility in Trahearne's voice.

SONNY
Hope the book comes out okay.

TRAHEARNE
Take care of yourself.

Goes back to typing; Sonny turns to go...

Cont.

TRAHEARNE
Sonny.

Sonny turns back.

TRAHEARNE
How was Katherine?

SONNY
She seems fine.

Awkward pause.

TRAHEARNE
Where in the hell did she find you anyway? Not in the Yellow Pages or something as mundane as that.

SONNY
I'm listed, but she found out about me in a bar. She went in to see if anybody had seen you and the bartender told her he had a friend who found lost things, like ex-husbands, and one thing led to another.

TRAHEARNE
I'll just bet it did...

SONNY
She's your ex-wife, isn't she? So what the hell do you care?

TRAHEARNE
For myself, I don't. It's just that it embarrasses my mother.

SONNY
You're worried about embarrassing your mother?

TRAHEARNE
Well, Katherine lives with her. In her house. It upsets her when Katherine whores her way across the state.

SONNY
What's it to you? You don't live with your mother.

Cont.

40 Cont

TRAHEARNE
But she's right across the way...

SONNY
You don't sound very happy about that.

TRAHEARNE
Sometimes I'm not.

SONNY
Move.

TRAHEARNE
It isn't that simple. She's an old woman. I promised her I'd live on the ranch until she died. I certainly owe her that. Besides, every place is the same.

SONNY
The people are different...

Trahearne goes back to his typing.

EXT. TRAHEARNE'S HOUSE - DAY 41

Sonny throws his bag onto the car seat as Melinda appears in her jogging clothes, Fireball at her feet.

MELINDA
Sorry to see you go, Sonny. You haven't had much of a rest.

SONNY
It's been very...relaxing...

Melinda gives him a knowing smile.

MELINDA
Katherine's a very attractive woman...Well, where are you off to next?

SONNY
I'm gonna swing through Grass Valley.

MELINDA
Pretty country.

Cont.

SONNY
Then over to Reno...I'm working a case there...

MELINDA
Working a case, it sounds so romantic...

SONNY
Believe me, it ain't romantic at all.

MELINDA
The rich are so dull and boring. I wish I knew more about the seamy side of life.

SONNY
I wish I knew less...

MELINDA
Well, thanks for bringing Trahearne back in one piece even if the goods were slightly damaged. And come back any time.

SONNY
Thanks.

He climbs into the El Camino.

SONNY
Come on, Fireball.

The dog sinks close to the ground and whines.

SONNY
Come on, you worthless mutt. You signed on for the whole tour whether you like it or not.

He gets back out, grabs Fireball by the collar and guides him into the car. Sonny starts up the engine and smiles at Melinda.

MELINDA
Take care...

CUT TO:

42

THE PHOTOGRAPH

of Betty Sue Flowers.

VOICE
(o.s.)
You've got to be kidding.

SONNY
Nope.

EXT. PLATEAU - GRASS VALLEY - DAY 43

Sonny and RALPH, a bearded young man, stand on a plateau overlooking the Bear River. A pine forest stretches below them.

Ralph wears a T-shirt with the inscription "Second Place, South East Asian War Games, 1964-1973" emblazoned over a silhouette map of Vietnam.

Both men are drinking Olympia beer from bottles.

RALPH
Not that, man, I mean you got to be kidding that this is her. When she was here, man, she was a cow. A sweet fuck but as big as a barn.

SONNY
You remember her, huh?

RALPH
Nobody ever forgets a fuck like that. Say, you wouldn't have another beer, would you?

Sonny nods and goes over to the cooler in his car to get two fresh beers. They sit down together on the steps of Ralph's cabin.

RALPH
She was wild, man, too much. How come you're looking for her, anyway?

Cont.

SONNY
She hasn't been in touch with her family for a long time, and they'd like to find her, see her again.

RALPH
I'm not real sure they want to see her again.

SONNY
Why not?

RALPH
I've known some crazy ladies and I've done some numbers I don't like to remember during the daylight hours, but this one, she was something else.

SONNY
Was she your lady?

RALPH
Everybody was everybody's. You know, trying to destroy the concept of private property and personal ownership. What the hell, you do enough drugs, it sounds okay.

SONNY
At least you hung onto the land.

RALPH
Just barely. They were pushing me to put the title in all our names, you know, telling me that I was on some sort of power trip because I owned the land, and that's when I finally went into overload...I thought we could make a living up here, but nobody wanted to be on the duty roster. The lazy bastards wouldn't work, so I got a little freaked on acid and conducted a search and destroy mission of my own, burned their hooches and relocated the fuckers. Man, you should have seen them run.

Cont.

SONNY
Was that when she left?

RALPH
No, she was gone by then. She didn't stay around too long before she split with this other dude. She may have even come with him...I just can't remember...

SONNY
Remember his name?

RALPH
Jack. Something like that. We weren't too heavy on last names, you know, shedding another vestige of the middle-class fascist life or some crap like that.

SONNY
Jack Krebbs.

RALPH
Sounds good to me, man, but I don't remember. A real shit. He wanted me to finance a skin flick about sexual freedom in the communes. He claimed we'd make a bundle. You know him?

SONNY
We haven't met, but I know him.

RALPH
Whatever happened to him?

SONNY
I heard a rumor that he was in Reno dealing dirty books.

RALPH
Figures.

SONNY
Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK 44

Sonny and Fireball whizzing along a vast highway, Sierra Nevada peaks in the b.g.

EXT. RENO STREET - NIGHT 45

The dusty El Camino pulls up in front of a garish nightclub with a bright neon sigh. Sonny gets out, locks Fireball in the cab and walks across the street to a nondescript gray warehouse.

INT. EROS UNLIMITED, RENO - NIGHT 46

Sonny knocks on the door of a small office tucked in the corner of the warehouse. Nearby are stacked row on row of books and video-cassettes.
TORRES, a formidable-looking man with a gold tooth in front opens the door.

TORRES
Yeah?

SONNY
I'd like to talk to Mr. Krebbs if he's not busy.

TORRES
He's busy, man. You wait. Outside.

SONNY
Outside. Right.

EXT. WAREHOUSE LOADING DOCK - NIGHT 47

Sonny sits on the dock, staring out at the darkness. Torres emerges, flanked by TWO HENCHMEN. They climb into a Lincoln with gray-tinted windows.

Sonny looks back to the door. JACK KREBBS, a large, florid, handsome man with wavy, blond hair, comes out with an unattractive man in a polyester suit, MR. HYLAND. Krebbs escorts him to the Lincoln. When Hyland gets in, it roars away and Krebbs walks back over to Sonny.

KREBBS
You looking for me?

SONNY
Jack Krebbs?

KREBBS
Here I am. Get on with it. I ain't got all day.

Cont.

SONNY
I'm looking for Betty Sue Flowers.

KREBBS
Never heard of her.

SONNY
Maybe you knew her by another name. You made a film with her in San Francisco, 'Secrets of the Flower Children.'

KREBBS
You got shit for information, good buddy. I never even been to San Francisco.

He turns abruptly and walks back inside.

SONNY
You're gonna wish you had.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUCKY'S CLUB - NIGHT 48

Krebbs exits.
Sonny is leaning against the wall a few yards down the street. When Krebbs stops to unlock his car, Sonny appears behind him and nabs a snub-nosed .38 into his ribs.

SONNY
Let's take a little drive, good buddy, and talk about shit for information.

KREBBS
You're buying a lot of trouble.

SONNY
Tell me about it.

As Krebbs turns, Sonny hammers him in the gut with the gun again and again until he collapses, then gives him a kick... He grabs Krebbs' head and pulls his face up and points the barrel of his gun directly in his eye.

SONNY
I guess you're not smart enough to make it easy on yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT 49

Krebbs, hair wet, sits naked in the steaming bathtub, bound up with wide masking tape and gagged with a sock.

SONNY
You ready now?

Krebbs nods furiously; Sonny cuts the tape around his mouth and withdraws the sock.

KREBBS
All right...I knew her...I brought her with me when I moved to Reno.

SONNY
And then?

KREBBS
I was flat, so I put her on the street. She was kinda fat but some dudes get off on that. Anyway, she got busted the first night out. I couldn't come up with the fine so she drew thirty days on the farm. That was the last time I ever saw her. That's the truth, man.

SONNY
How come I never believe anybody when they say 'That's the truth?'

He reaches for the faucet.

KREBBS
No. No more hot water, okay? Listen, I never saw her again... but I heard something later.

SONNY
Yeah?

KREBBS
After she got out of the slam, she went up around Tahoe and lived with this lady who does rehab work or something with hookers and runaways. Some rich bitch liberal.

SONNY
How old was she when you made that film?

Cont.

49 Cont.

KREBBS
I didn't ask, man. I didn't want to know. But, hell, she wanted to do it. If it hadn't been me, it've been somebody else.

SONNY
Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE TAHOE COUNTRY - DAY 50

The El Camino climbs up a twisting road above the lake and comes to a stop.
A large log house is visible on top of the ridge. Sonny gets out and gives it a long look; Fireball leaps out behind him and drags along after him up the steep trail.

EXT. SELMA HINDS' HOUSE - DAY 51

Near the crest of the hill, Sonny and Fireball are met by a pack of yapping dogs. Fireball snarls and snaps in return a Sonny gets a grip on his collar.

SELMA HINDS, a serene, motherly woman of mid-fifty, stands in her doorway, watching.

SELMA
Can I help you?

Sonny struggles to hold Fireball and protect his feet from the other dogs.

SONNY
Yes, ma'am. You could call off your dogs.

SELMA
They're harmless.

SONNY
Maybe. But I'm not so sure about mine...

She comes out and herds her dogs into a fenced in garden.

SELMA
Besides, they don't belong to me; I belong to them.

Sonny keeps a tight hold on Fireball and cautiously moves closer to her door.

51 Cont.

SONNY
I'd like to talk to you about Betty Sue Flowers, Miz Hinds.

SELMA
What about her?

SONNY
Her mother hired me to find her.

Pause.

SELMA
Come on in.

INT. HINDS' HOUSE - DAY 52

The room is pleasantly cluttered; several sleeping cats; Fireball remains outside the screen door, looking in.

Selma and Sonny are seated on the couch; STACY, a tough-looking young woman of twenty, kneels by a cat on the floor, changing its flea collar...

SELMA
As you can see, I take in strays...

STACY
Like me.

SELMA
I do what I can to help them to rebuild the body and replenish the spirit. Then, when they're ready, I send them home. Those who aren't able to leave, I keep by my side.

STACY
Mostly it works out the human animals go but all the other animals stay.

SONNY
And Betty Sue came here?

SELMA
Yes. For a time.

SONNY
When did she leave?

Cont.

SELMA
Her spirit's never left us. It walks among us even now.

SONNY
I'm not sure I follow that, Miz Hinds.

STACY
She's dead.

SONNY
Dead?

SELMA
Yes, Mr. Sughrue.

SONNY
What happened?

STACY
She was coming back from town with supplies one afternoon. A little kid ran onto the highway in front of her. She swerved off the road to miss him. Right into the lake.

Sonny gets up and walks over to the window.

SONNY
Shit...

Stacy and Selma look at him.

SONNY
I sure hate to find them dead, ma'am.

SELMA
I'm sorry.

SONNY
How'd she do here, was she happy?

SELMA
She was like a rose in bloom. Betty Sue was on her last legs when she came here. After a month in jail, years of drugs, the worst kind of life...she looked forty years old the day she came to me. And the day she died, she looked sixteen.

SELMA (Cont.)
You understand that I don't judge or criticize, but when they come here, they must follow my rules or leave. No meat, no drugs, no sex. What they do when they leave is their business. And if they come back up the mountain in rags, I take them in gladly, but while they are here, they must obey the rules.

SONNY
And Betty Sue had trouble?

SELMA
The men followed her around like a bitch in heat. She fended them off, but it was hard for her. She seemed to need that sort of affection...

SONNY
Didn't you try to find her folks?

STACY
'Course she did.

SELMA
I placed advertisements in all the Bay Area papers. That's where she said she was from. No one ever responded.

SONNY
She buried around here?

SELMA
I had the body cremated and the ashes scattered in the wind.

SONNY
How long was she here?

SELMA
Just over six months. Betty Sue was just about ready to face the world once again, but she never got the chance. I'm sure she would have had a different life.

Sonny turns back and looks at Selma.

52 Cont.

SONNY
I'm sure her mother would want me to thank you for taking her in. And thank you for talking to me.

SELMA
You're quite welcome, Mr. Sughrue.

SONNY
Keep up the good work, ma'am. One thing...could you tell me the date she died?

Selma speaks without a moment's hesitation.

SELMA
May twenty-first. Four years ago.

STACY
Hey, you don't believe her, you can go down to the County Courthouse and look at the death certificate.

SONNY
I believe her, but I don't think Betty Sue's mother will unless I take her a copy of that certificate ...Thanks again, Miz Hinds.

He walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY RECORDS OFFICE - DAY 53

Sonny thumbs through a file, finds the death certificate, curses under his breath and slams the drawer shut. He pauses, opens the drawer and takes it back out. He walks over to a counter which has a sign: Photostats 25¢.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT 54

The El Camino pulls into the parking lot; Sonny and Fireball get out and walk into the lobby.

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOBBY - NIGHT 55

Sonny stands at the front desk. The CLERK, a fat teenage girl, stands with her back to him, putting mail in slot boxes. The telephone switchboard buzzes loudly, but she ignores it.

55 Cont.

SONNY
Can I have the key to room seventeen, please?

She turns and puts it down in front of him, returns to the boxes.

SONNY
Any messages?

Switchboard buzz ceases. Begins again.

CLERK
Nope.

SONNY
Aren't you going to answer it?

CLERK
I work the desk. Sandy'll be back in a minute.

SONNY
I'm expecting a call.

The Clerk turns and smiles.

CLERK
I'll be sure to tell her.

He walks out.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT 56

Sonny and Fireball walk down the outside corridor to room seventeen.

Two men fall in step behind them; Fireball growls, Sonny turns and one of the men saps him. The other makes a grab toward the dog and he charges away. The two men drag Sonny into his room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 57

Sonny sits slumped in a chair, still conscious but in bad shape; he's flanked by the two henchman...Torres stands, grinning, in the center of the room; Krebbs sits facing the doorway.

KREBBS
I'm sorry, man. but we have to balance our account. You got any suggestions?

Cont.

57 Cont.

SONNY
Get on with it. If these clowns were going to blow me away, you wouldn't be anywhere within a hundred miles.

Torres takes a sap glove from his pocket as the henchmen jerk Sonny to his feet.

TORRES
Nothing personal, you understand. Just business.

SONNY
Don't let me stand in the way.

TORRES
This is one smart mother. He ain't gonna fight back.

He grins then hits Sonny in the gut.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT 58

Sonny is now trussed up in the tub as Krebbs was before; hair wet, water steaming around him.

KREBBS
You sure she's dead?

SONNY
Photostat of the death certificate over in my pocket.

One of the henchmen goes to get it.

TORRES
Awful lot of grief going down over a dead whore.

SONNY
That's why they pay me the big money.

The henchman returns, hands Krebbs the document. Krebbs looks up at Torres...

KREBBS
Okay. I guess that wipes it.

Krebbs stuffs a handkerchief in Sonny's mouth, then turns back on the hot water.

TORRES
Stay clean if you wanna stay alive.

They leave him; Sonny stares at the rushing water...

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - DAWN 59

A BLACK MAID pushes a cart of clean-up tools along the corridor...Fireball lays whining at the door to room seventeen. She stops and he jumps up and scratches at the door.

She leans down to examine the welcome mat.

A trickle of water runs out the door.

She knocks.

No response.

The maid fumbles through a ring of keys...
Finds the right one and opens the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY 60

Sonny, unshaven and lobster-faced, grips the wheel of the El Camino. Fireball tries to nuzzle him affectionately.

SONNY
Get away, you good-for-nothing mutt. Watchdog, my ass.

EXT. ROSIE'S 61

Sonny pulls into the lot and parks his El Camino among the wrecked cars.

INT. ROSIE'S 62

Rosie runs out from behind the bar and hugs Sonny joyfully. He stands awkwardly, ill at ease.

Fireball jumps up on the bar, tipping over bottles and lapping up the beer.

ROSIE
She with you, Sonny?

SONNY
No, Rosie, 'fraid not.

He leads her over to a booth. They sit.

SONNY
...She's dead.

ROSIE
Huh? What are you talking about?

SONNY
I'm sorry, Rosie. I tracked her to a place in Nevada.

ROSIE
She ain't dead, Sonny.

SONNY
I'm awfully sorry. She died four years ago...

ROSIE
What do you call this then?

She pulls a postcard from her apron pocket and slaps it on the table in front of him.

ROSIE
Never heard of the dead writin' home about it.

Sonny begins reading the postcard.

SONNY
When did you get this?

ROSIE
Last Tuesday. And here I been singin' your praises, thinkin' you found her and put her up to it. Get outta here, you lyin son of a bitch. And take that goddamned dog with you. I'm through with you both.

SONNY
Hold on now. I wasn't lyin' to you. I was just tellin' you what was told to me.

ROSIE
Why'd anybody start a mean story like that?

SONNY
I don't know, Rosie...But I'm sure as hell gonna find out.

CUT TO:

INT. TAHOE LODGE RESTAURANT - DAY 63

A modern restaurant with ceiling-high windows overlooking the lake. It is late afternoon; there are no diners. Sonny sits alone at a table facing the entrance door rather than the spectacular view.

Selma enters, walks over and sits down.

SONNY
Why did you lie to me, Miz Hinds? Betty Sue is alive.

Pause.

SELMA
She was different. Different from the first. Betty Sue never talked about her childhood. Never. Not a word the whole time she was with me. She was different from all the others who have ever stayed with me.

SONNY
Yes, ma'am.

SELMA
Why do you think she wouldn't talk about her childhood?

SONNY
Maybe she felt like a princess stolen by peasants. I don't know.

SELMA
Children feel that way too often; it's so sad.

SONNY
I guess the trick is to take what you get and try to live with it.

From out of nowhere, Melinda appears behind Sonny and slips down into a chair.

MELINDA
Hello, Sonny.

Sonny just looks at her for several moments.

SONNY
What the hell...how could I have been so dumb...

Cont.

Selma turns to Sonny.

SELMA
Please don't take her away.

MELINDA
It's okay, Selma. Don't worry. He's a friend of my husband's. How did Trahearne find out that his wife was Betty Sue Flowers?

SONNY
Trahearne didn't send me, your mother did...She just got your card.

MELINDA
What are you talking about?

SONNY
You didn't write to her?

MELINDA
Of course not...What's going on?

SELMA
Don't let them hurt her.

Selma begins to cry.

SONNY
I don't know what you got to hide and I don't care. As far as I'm concerned, Betty Sue Flowers is dead. If you don't care if your mother grieves over you, that's your business...I've had it.

Selma sobs.

MELINDA
Look, I've got to take Selma back home and calm her down. I'm really sorry about all this, Sonny. And I'd like to try to explain it. Please come over to Selma's in the morning. Please. I want to talk to you. Bring Trahearne.

Sonny watches her lead Selma away.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE - DUSK 64

Sonny stands at front door ringing the bell. No response. Trahearne's Caddie sits in the driveway, and there are newspapers and milk bottles on the porch. Sonny turns back toward the street and stares out. Fireball sits in the car.

EXT. STREET 65

Edna Trahearne leans on her walking stick watching him. After a moment, she calls out.

EDNA
You looking for my baby boy?

SONNY
That's right, ma'am.

He walks down the driveway to her.

SONNY
But it's a little hard to think of him as a 'baby boy.'

EDNA
You'd be a fool to think anything else. He's a child dressed up like an old man, that's all. What do you want with him?

SONNY
Name's Sonny Sughrue, ma'am, remember? I'm a friend. Is he home?

EDNA
Let's go look.

EXT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE 66

They walk up the driveway and around to the patio side door. Sonny tries to take her arm to assist her, but she breaks away.

EDNA
My father used to own everything you can see for a day's ride in every direction. I still own a pretty goddamned good-sized piece of it. I was raised here when this was a working ranch, and I was as good on horseback as any goddamned man on the place. And as far as guts, better than any man I met. When my father got old, he

EDNA (Cont.)
turned into a whiny old woman, begging me to marry and give him a grandson. My only mistake in life was giving in to the demands of a sick old man. Well, I gave him an heir, but I wouldn't marry.

SONNY
Ma'am?

EDNA
Don't be dense. Trahearne's my maiden name. He's a bastard. I took the train to Seattle, picked out the best rodeo cowboy I could find and paid him five thousand dollars. God know, I didn't get my money's worth.

SONNY
That's convenient.

EDNA
What's that?

SONNY
Your excuse. Whatever Trahearne is, he isn't your fault...Not your mistake. Shit, no...blame it on some bronc rider.

ENDA
I ought to have you thrown off my place. Hell, if I was twenty years younger, I'd do it myself.

SONNY
No, ma'am. You'd have to hire it done...How you fork a horse doesn't have shit to do with what a person's got inside. And meanness has nothing to do with guts...

EDNA
You've got a lot of sand for a polite man. Katherine may be right about you.

SONNY
How's that, ma'am?

EDNA
'How's that, ma'am.' Damn, boy, if you ain't a piss-cutter.

When they reach the side door, Edna opens it. Sonny leans against the screen, waiting for her to enter first.

EDNA
You do right by my baby boy and maybe we'll just forget this conversation.

SONNY
Yes, ma'am.

EDNA
Good night, Mr. Sughrue.

She turns and labors back toward the street. Sonny enters, the screen door slamming behind him.

INT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE 67

Sonny flips on the lights as he passes through the kitchen, dining room, living room. At the door to the study, he pauses...

INT. STUDY 68

Sonny sees a disheveled Trahearne stretched out on the couch. There is a whiskey decanter on the table beside him with dirty glasses and coffee mugs. Sonny snaps on the lamp, casting a yellow glare on his pale, unshaven face and revealing the telephone receiver off the hook. Sonny slams the receiver back onto the cradle. Trahearne stirs, sits up slowly.

TRAHEARNE
Up all night...working.

SONNY
You mean, up all day, drinking. It's eight o'clock.

Trahearne slowly pulls himself to his feet.

TRAHEARNE
What day is it?

SONNY
Tuesday. You want a weather report, too?

Cont.

TRAHEARNE
Melinda's gone again, Sonny.
Took off bigger'n hell.

Sonny pushes Trahearne back against the wall.

SONNY
Don't give me that crap, colorful old writer...You knew Melinda was Betty Sue Flowers all along, didn't you? You used me to dig up her past for you.

Trahearne breaks free, goes to the whiskey decanter and takes a drink then turns back to Sonny.

TRAHEARNE
I just wanted to know where she goes. Every five or six weeks, she takes off. Sometimes she makes some excuse, sometimes she just goes.

SONNY
Ever ask her about it?

TRAHEARNE
No.

SONNY
She probably would have told you.

TRAHEARNE
Do you know where she is?

SONNY
Yeah. I'll take you there in the morning. Go to bed. You're a wreck.

TRAHEARNE
You learned all the sordid details and you didn't judge her...I've thought about that a lot. I'm beginning to understand it. I'm even writing a book about it... Go ahead and ask me what it's about, Sonny. I'll tell you. Love and forgiveness.

SONNY
I'm glad one of us knows something about it.

Cont.

68 Cont.

Trahearne starts to walk away.

SONNY
Trahearne, did you send Rosie that postcard?

TRAHEARNE
Somebody had to keep you on the trail.

SONNY
You bastard.

Trahearne shuffles away.

Sonny pours himself a drink and sits at Trahearne's desk. which is cluttered with unopened mail, magazines and newspapers. The only evidence of a manuscript in progress in one typed page on top of many wadded up sheets of paper. Sonny sips his drink, lifts up the page and reads:

SONNY
'Once you flew sleeping in sunshine, amber limbs locked in flight. Now you lie there rocky still beyond the black chop, your chains blue light. Dark waters hold you down...I will not mourn. When next the world rises warm, men will chip arrowheads from your heart...'

He stares somberly at the page.

SONNY
Love and forgiveness...

He picks up one of the paper wads.

MANUSCRIPT PAGE 69

Sonny's hand smoothes it out. It is a title page:

LOST WOMEN AND DESPERATE CHARACTERS

By

Abraham Trahearne

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - LAKE TAHOE - DAY 70

Sonny pulls off onto a side road and parks at the trail to Selma Hinds' house next to a yellow Volkswagen convertible.

WH

Cont.

70 Cont.

Trahearne looks around, confused.

Sonny and Fireball climb out and start up the trial. Trahearne tags after them.

EXT. TRIAL - DAY 71

Sonny, several yards ahead of Trahearne, stops suddenly and kneels down to examine drops of blood across the path.

Fireball barks and runs toward the trees. Sonny follows him and finds one of Selma's dogs dead from gunshot wounds. Sonny looks back to Trahearne.

SONNY
Take my keys and go back down to the car. If I'm not back in fifteen minutes, drive like a bat out of hell and get the sheriff.

TRAHEARNE
What's wrong?

SONNY
I don't know yet.

Trahearne stands looking at the dead animal.

SONNY
Go on.

Sonny gives him a push and runs up the hill with Fireball.

EXT. HINDS' HOUSE - DAY 72

In the garden, Stacy rubs back tears as she digs a hole with a shovel. Beside her lay three dead dogs. She looks up at Sonny.

SONNY
What the hell happened here?

She raises the shovel and flails it at him wildly. He ducks and falls backward.

SONNY
Wait! Jesus Christ...

As Stacy swings again, Selma fumbles through the door levelling a large shotgun at him...She fires.

Cont.

72 Cont.

SELMA
I'll kill you, you bastard!

Sonny sprints for cover. Buckshot ricochets off a tree. He stumbles and pulls himself back up. Fireball howls.

EXT. TRIAL 73

Sonny races down the hill, tripping over Fireball who has decided to retreat. Sonny kicks at him to get him out of the way.

SONNY
Goddamn it, Fireball...

Trahearne labors up the hill loaded with firearms: a riot shotgun, a Browning automatic and a .38.

TRAHEARNE
What the hell's going on up there?

Sonny grabs the Browning from Trahearne.

SONNY
Get back to the car before you hurt someone and take this goddamn dog with you.

TRAHEARNE
Hell, boy, you're hit.

SONNY
Buckshot. Now, get back down the hill.

TRAHEARNE
Don't tell me what to do. That's my wife up there.

EXT. HINDS' HOUSE 74

Sonny creeps across the ground on his belly, breathing hard. Blood begins to soak through his shirt.
Selma and Stacy are now inside the door, shotgun barrel sticking out...Sonny dashes across the clearing, dives onto the ground and levels the Browning.

SONNY
All right, ladies, drop the gun.

Cont.

74 Cont.

He fires and the overhead porch light shatters, showering glass in the doorway...
The door slowly opens.
Selma points the gun down and walks out. Stacy follows, holding a pick-ax.
Trahearne, Fireball at his heels, steps up behind Sonny with authority.

TRAHEARNE
Come on, honey, put that down.

STACY
Don't 'honey' me, mother-fucker.

SELMA
Put it down, Stacy.

Selma lays the gun on the ground, and Stacy lets go of the pick-ax.

SONNY
That's better. Now let's all go inside and find out what the hell's goin on here.

INT. HINDS' HOUSE 75

Sonny straddles a chair, bare-chested, as Stacy removes pellets from his back with a long tweezers. Selma and Trahearne sit on the couch. Fireball snoozes near the door.

SELMA
They came at dawn, wearing ski masks, and began shooting the dogs. It was terrible...

STACY
I went to a year of vet school...

SONNY
That's good enough for me. I was delivered by a vet.

Selma toys with a handkerchief, balling it up as she speaks.

SELMA
Betty Sue ran outside. Then I heard her scream...They took her away.

Cont.

Selma begins to sob.

STACY
When you guys showed up we figured you were with them.

SONNY
What did they look like?

STACY
I only saw them leaving. Two real big guys and a greaser with a gold tooth.

SONNY
Did you call the cops?

STACY
They said they'd kill her if we did.

TRAHEARNE
Bastards...

SELMA
Can't you help us?

TRAHEARNE
They're miles from here by now...

SONNY
I think I know how to find them.

STACY
Let me come. I'm not very strong, but I'm plenty mean.

TRAHEARNE
I can belive that.

STACY
I can take care of myself.

SONNY
Did any of them see you?

STACY
No.

Cont.

WH

75 Cont.

SONNY
Sure?

STACY
Yeah, why?

SONNY
Do you think you could act real nice to some creeps?

STACY
Easy. I've done that all my life.

CUT TO:

INT. LUCKY'S, RENO - NIGHT 76

Stacy, dressed like a high-class whore with heavy makeup and spiked heels, struts through the doorway. All heads turn to look her over.

Sonny slips in behind her and takes a corner seat, deep within the shadows.

Krebbs is seated at the bar talking to MIKE, one of the henchmen from the warehouse. Stacy slithers onto a stool next to Krebbs and beckons the BARTENDER over.

STACY
Vodka tonic.

Krebbs gives her the eye.
Stacy lights a cigarette, ignoring him as he leans over.

KREBBS
Hi, honey.

He gestures to the Bartender.

KREBBS
Put this on my tab...Looking for a good time?

STACY
I'm lookin' for work. Sometimes they're the same thing.

KREBBS
What sort of work you looking for, honey?

Cont.

STACY
Same sort of work I was doing back East until the weather got to me.

KREBBS
The weather?

STACY
The heat, man.

KREBBS
Oh, yeah, right, the heat. Well, what sort of work was that?

STACY
What do you think? Get off my case and outa my face, okay?

KREBBS
Hey, wait, babe, you've come to the right place. We could have some real fun.

STACY
Fun and profit?

He puts his hand on her arm.

KREBBS
Depends how you want to play it.

STACY
Hit the road, man. You want a free sample, call the Avon lady.

KREBBS
Ahh, I don't mind paying.

STACY
A hundred for a half and half.

KREBBS
That's a little steep.

Stacy raises her voice.

STACY
If you can't afford the merchandise, man, get outta the store.

76 Cont

All the bar chatter ceases and everyone stares at them.

KREBBS
Okay, a hundred. Let's go.

STACY
Let's see the bread first.

Krebbs pulls out a wad of bills.

KREBBS
My place is only ten minutes from here.

STACY
Not your place. My motel room at the airport.

KREBBS
Okay.

Krebbs turns to one of the beefs nearby.

KREBBS
Let's go, Mike.

STACY
Hey, who's that?

KREBBS
My driver.

STACY
Is he going to hold your cock?

KREBBS
All right...

He whispers something to Mike and then turns and leaves with Stacy.

EXT. LUCKY'S - NIGHT 77

As Stacy and Krebbs drive away, Sonny comes out the door, looking around...He steps out onto the street.

SONNY
Where are you, Trahearne, goddammit.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTED CAR 78

Sonny drives furiously. Trahearne stares straight ahead. Fireball sits quietly in the backseat.

WH Cont.

SONNY
You dumb son of a bitch. Why weren't you right out front?

TRAHEARNE
I didn't want them to see me so I parked up at the corner.

SONNY
Didn't you see me out front, wavin' my goddamn arms...

TRAHEARNE
Must have dozed off for a minute.

SONNY
If they're not at the motel when we get there, if he took her home or somewhere else, I'm gonna put you back in the hospital, old man.

TRAHEARNE
What the hell, boy, that little lady can take care of herself.

Sonny ignores him. Trahearne takes out a flask and has a quick swig.

TRAHEARNE
Aw hell, come on, don't be so damned serious...

Trahearne offers the flask to Sonny who pushes it away. Trahearne takes another gulp.

TRAHEARNE
They've got my Melinda and I don't know what to do, Sonny...

SONNY
Try doing just exactly what I tell you to do for a change.

TRAHEARNE
Okay, okay. But it better come out right.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 79

Krebbs is on top of Stacy in bed.

With sudden movement, Sonny breaks through the door, crosses the room and clubs him with a pistol butt. He jerks Krebbs onto the floor.

Stacy leaps to her feet, wrapping the sheet around her.

SONNY
I'm sorry we were late.

STACY
It doesn't matter.

SONNY
It does to me.

Trahearne walks in grandly.

TRAHEARNE
All my fault, my dear, but it couldn't be helped.

Stacy walks over to Trahearne and slaps him hard, then runs into the bathroom.

TRAHEARNE
What did I say?

He spots Krebbs on the floor as the sound of a shower begins in the bathroom.

TRAHEARNE
Let me get my hands on that son of a bitch.

Sonny grabs Trahearne roughly and shoves him into a chair.

SONNY
Just sit there and shut up.

Sonny slowly lugs Krebbs towards the bathroom. Trahearne slumps down in the chair, pulls his bottle out of his pocket and takes a swig.

TRAHEARNE
I always fuck it up...

Sonny yells at him from the bathroom doorway.

SONNY
I told you to shut up.

CUT TO:

WH

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT 80

Krebbs is tied up in the bathtub. Sonny sits on the side of the tub. A fresh-scrubbed and dressed Stacy leans on the countertop. A phone book and cheap .22 automatic rest on the toilet lid.

SONNY
Stacy why don't you go in the other room for a minute.

STACY
No way. I deserve to watch. If you blow his brains out, it'll make my day...

KREBBS
Sorry, sweetie, this guy's all bluff.

Sonny lifts Krebbs' feet, shoves the phone book under them.

KREBBS
This bathtub routine of yours is getting a little stale. Wise up. It doesn't matter what you try. I'd be dead and buried by sun-up if I told you where she is.

Sonny picks up the .22, pauses for a second, then fires twice into Krebbs; right foot.

Stacy leans into the sink and gags...

Krebbs gasps as Sonny shoves a washrag into his mouth...

SONNY
Ready for a little talkin' now?

Krebbs grimaces in pain but shakes his head. Sonny lifts him by the hair and slips the phone book under his butt.

SONNY
Guess what's next...and I'm only going to ask once. Now are you going to tell me where she is?

Sonny's pistol hovers above Krebbs genitals...After a brief moment he nods.

CUT TO:

WH

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 81

Krebbs, dressed in his wrinkled clothes, hops out the door. His bleeding foot is wrapped in a towel and Sonny is close behind him holding the .22. Trahearne and Stacy follows them into the parking lot.

SONNY
Give me your car keys.

Krebbs fishes them out of his pocket. Sonny goes to the trunk of Krebbs' car and opens it.

SONNY
Now get in.

KREBBS
Christ, no, please. I told you everything I know...

SONNY
I haven't got all night. Move it.

Sonny helps him crawl into the trunk and pockets his car key.

TRAHEARNE
What's going to happen to him?

SONNY
If we're alive later tonight, we'll give him a head start on his friends. But if we're dead or in jail, he'll probably die locked in there.

Sonny slams down the lid.
They walk over to the rented car.
Fireball sits at attention inside.

SONNY
Hell, even if everything goes like it's supposed to, he's probably going to buy it.

TRAHEARNE
Doesn't that bother you?

SONNY
Not a bit. He's a piece of shit, man, and he lied to me. I gave him every chance I could and he still lied to me, so fuck him.

Sonny turns to Stacy.

SONNY
You ready?

She nods.

SONNY
Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. HYLAND'S HOUSE - NIGHT 82

A large, expensive home in the outskirts of Reno. Several cars are parked in the circular drive. Mike, the Bodyguard, loiters near the door.

Sonny emerges from the shadows and clubs Mike. He then signals to the street and Stacy drives up. Fireball whines when she and Trahearne get out; Stacy locks him in the car as Trahearne helps Sonny lug Mike into the garage.

SONNY
You got it straight now? Trahearne, you stay out here with the shotgun. Anybody shows up, stick the gun in their face and hold them 'til we get back. Now, try not to shoot anybody...

TRAHEARNE
I had a platoon on the 'Canal when you were still in diapers.

SONNY
Just stay outside and try not to think about your old war stories.

Sonny takes the riot shotgun out of his hands, checks the chamber and hands it back.
He next takes the Browning from his belt and passes it to Stacy.

SONNY
You cover my back. If you have to fire this thing, hold it low... like this...and just keep pulling the trigger till it's empty.

82 Cont

STACY
You got it.

TRAHEARNE
You sure you don't want me inside?

Sonny silences Trahearne with a look, then leads Stacy into the house.

INT. HYLAND'S HOUSE 83

Sonny crosses the darkened living room.
Stacy follows crouched in combat stance holding the automatic.
Sonny pauses before crossing into the hallway.
No one there.
The SOUND of disco music comes from somewhere in back of the house.
They creep along to the end of the corridor, closed off by a heavy black curtain...
Bright light spills through the connecting seam.
Sonny peeks through the curtain.
A GUARD is posted on the other side, his back toward Sonny.

Sonny creeps up to the drapes, drops him with his pistol butt and pulls him back into the hallway. He tapes the Guard's mouth, binds his hands and drags him over to a closet.

INT. LARGE ROOM - SONNY'S P.O.V. 84

Loud disco music blares from a jukebox.
FIVE ACTORS and EIGHT ACTRESSES gyrate to the beat on top of an enormous round bed.
Their naked bodies are decorated with garish body paint and coils of colored liquid light.
A mirror on the ceiling reflects the kaleidoscope of interwoven legs and pumping torsos.

A 35mm CAMERAMAN films the action while the DIRECTOR and TWO CREW MEMBERS watch.

On the sidelines, Melinda, covered by a flimsy kimono, shifts nervously on the couch with Hyland on one side of her and Torres on the other.
She is heavily madeup, wearing a blonde Afro-style wig.
Hyland puts his hand on her leg and she pulls away from him.

INT. HALLWAY 85

Sonny surveys the room, slipping a Colt .22 automatic with a silencer out of his belt. He touches the .38 in his back pocket.

Cont.

85 Cont.

SONNY
All right. You ready?

STACY
Yeah. I guess so.

SONNY
Let's hit it.

INT. LARGE ROOM 86

Sonny charges in, blasting a shot into the jukebox. The glass shatters and the record needle screeches across the disc.
An Actress screams...
Torres leaps to his feet and reaches into his coat... Sonny fires and his hand stops; the bullet grazes his shoulder and hits the wall.

SONNY
I don't want to have to kill anybody...

He looks at Torres.

SONNY
But you move and the next one's in your eye. Stacy, cover the others.

Stacy steps toward the Director, aiming her gun into his face.

Sonny moves closer to Torres.

SONNY
Bring it out slowly with two fingers, slow, and sit it on the floor.

Torres does as he's told.

SONNY
Melinda. Over here.

She moves slowly across the room to him, almost as if she's in a trance...Sonny turns to Hyland.

HYLAND
It's been a long time since I talked to a dead man.

Cont.

SONNY
You move or open your mouth again, Mr. Hyland, and you're the dead man. Shake him down, Torres.

Torres frisks Hyland.

TORRES
If I were you, I think I'd just keep looking at the wall.

SONNY
Now, up against the wall next to him, Amigo.

Sonny turns to Stacy who's holding her own over by the actors.

SONNY
You cover these two for a minute. If they even so much as cough, kill'em.

Sonny points his automatic at the cast and crew.

SONNY
Everyone lie down flat on the floor with your hands behind your necks.

Trahearne suddenly bolts into the room, jacking a round into the riot gun.

TRAHEARNE
All right, goddammit, where is she?

His weapon goes off exploding the ceiling mirror. Shards of glass fly; lights explode...
Torres charges Stacy and Hyland dives behind the couch. Stacy fires. The first two rounds splinter the floor at Torres' feet. He hits the floor as two more rounds slam past his head into the couch. He thrusts his hands above his head.

TORRES
Okay!

Torres stands slowly, hands up, shaking his head.

TORRES
How the hell did she miss?

SONNY
Good girl.

He looks at Trahearne.

SONNY
Get your wife out of here and give me that goddamned shotgun.

Trahearne maintains a sheepish look as he hands over his gur. He takes Melinda's arm and wordlessly leads her toward the door.

Sonny goes over to the couch, peeks behind. He pauses then looks back to Stacy.

SONNY
Stacy, you herd these people on out.

Everyone begins shuffling out the door. Sonny whispers to Stacy.

SONNY
Give me the Browning and you take this.

He hands her the shotgun.

SONNY
Now, lock everyone in the garage then wait for me in the car.

STACY
Got it.

Stacy leaves Sonny and Torres alone by the couch.

TORRES
Is he dead?

SONNY
She shot his brains all over the wall.

Torres steps over to the couch, looks behind it.

TORRES
Jesus...

SONNY
Why'd you come after Melinda?

TORRES
Business. An old debt...

SONNY
I'm listening.

Sonny begins rubbing fingerprints off the Browning. Torres eyes him nervously...

TORRES
I heard she stole some money from Hyland and split a coupla years ago. Krebbs had to make it up outa his own pocket...

SONNY
My heart bleeds...

TORRES
What are you going to do with me?

SONNY
I got a few ideas.

TORRES
Listen, I got nothing against the girl. I wasn't even around here then. She's got no grievance with me.

SONNY
I do. You've got a short memory.

TORRES
Look, you got a murder to explain here. Maybe we can help each other out. Make a deal. I'll call the cops, say we're bein' robbed. They'll get here in twenty minutes...

He nods over toward the couch.

TORRES
Too late...Look, nobody's going to give a shit that Hyland's dead. He was a real bastard. They'll all be happy to see him gone.

Cont.

SONNY
Not good enough. I'd need a real heavy edge.

TORRES
Name it.

SONNY
Your prints on the Browning... with a little bit of security like that you won't ever be tempted to bother Mrs. Trahearne.

TORRES
...Okay. You got it.

Sonny tosses the Browning onto the couch.

SONNY
Unload it, wipe it down, wipe off the rounds and reload it...

Torres moves over and picks up the Browning and does as told. Sonny moves around the room with the .38 trained on Torres. He leans over and picks up a plastic bag containing film accessories, dumps them out...

SONNY
Hand it to me in the bag.

He does.

SONNY
Now, turn around.

TORRES
Lay me down real easy...

SONNY
Nothing personal. Just business...

Sonny slams him on the back of the head with his pistol butt...Torres crashes to the floor.

SONNY
Good luck, Man. I'm in it with you.

Sonny slips the gun back into his belt and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTED CAR - NIGHT 87

Sonny piles into the car and Stacy roars out the front gate. Trahearne and Melinda are in the backseat. She cuddles Fireball.

TRAHEARNE
What took you so goddamned long.

MELINDA
Shh.

TRAHEARNE
Well, we've been sitting out here waiting for God knows how long and...

Stacy slams on the brakes, jerking everyone forward suddenly.

STACY
Just shut up, you ungrateful old bastard.

STACY
Stop making excuses for him.

Stacy starts the car moving again. Trahearne takes out his flask for a sip then passes it up to Sonny.

STACY
Is that your answer to everything?

SONNY
Don't make him mad or he might not give me any...

Sonny swigs from the flask, passes it to Stacy. She refuses at first, then accepts a swallow, gasps and coughs...

STACY
I don't know why you drink that terrible stuff.

SONNY
It's the best way to get drunk.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 88

Two double beds.
Stacy sleeps in one; Sonny sits against the headboard of the other sipping a drink...
A door slam from the next room jars his reverie. He pads over to the window and pulls back the drapes to see the headlights of a cab sweep across the room.
Sonny steps outside, closing the door carefully behind him.

EXT. MOTEL 89

Trahearne climbs into the cab. As it pulls away, he looks up and sees Sonny walk to the motel room next door.
Sonny raps and after a moment Melinda opens the door...
Her face is scrubbed pale and the wig is gone.

SONNY
Everything all right?

MELINDA
Yes. I think so.

SONNY
Okay, I just...

MELINDA
No. Don't go. Please. I want to talk to you.

Sonny enters.

INT. MOTEL ROOM 90

The room is identical to Sonny's except for the king-size bed which is still made up. She sits on the end of the bed, Fireball nestling on the floor near her...

MELINDA
What took you so long after we left?

SONNY
Details. Cleaning up your tracks...

MELINDA
I'm sorry.

SONNY
You can't steal from those people and get away with it. Didn't you know that?

Cont.

MELINDA
I wasn't thinking. I didn't have any money and I had to get away from them. I just couldn't make another movie. I couldn't... couldn't do it. I couldn't fuck any more strangers.

She looks at Sonny without embarrassment.

MELINDA
When I first started, it seemed easy. I mean, it seemed like fun, you know, I was stoned all the time and fucking everybody anyway, so getting paid for it seemed like a bonus. What I did with my body didn't matter. I kept telling myself only the mind and the spirit mattered, but I was wrong...Everything you do matters.

Sonny sits beside her.

MELINDA
I knew if I didn't get away I'd probably end up back in jail, and I was scared. I didn't think I'd survive it again.

SONNY
What happened in jail?

MELINDA
I was cell mated with a woman who was smarter and prettier than me...and she was also the meanest, toughest person I've ever met. She beat me half to death the first night, and humiliated me every night after that. I was so scared I hardly ate. Lost thirty pounds... But the worst thing she did was tell me that in a few years I'd be just like her. I knew she was right. When I had the chance to be paroled to Selma's halfway house, I grabbed it.

SONNY
Then Jack Krebbs tracked you down...

MELINDA
He took one look at the new me and got dollar signs in his eyes. He dragged me up to Reno, had me working for Hyland by the end of the day. After about a month, I saw a chance and grabbed their stash. Forty thousand...

SONNY
That wasn't very smart. Running's one thing but money's the only thing in the world they care about.

MELINDA
I know...I grabbed the money and ran back to Selma's. She sent me to a friend of hers in St. Louis. The next month, Selma's daughter, Melinda, was killed in a car crash...She said it was me. You see, that way she thought I could come back there to live. But I couldn't. I'd always be afraid.

SONNY
What did you do with forty grand?

MELINDA
Went to Europe for awhile. Came back. Went to college. Then I met Trahearne. I guess you know the rest.

SONNY
I don't know why you ran away from home in the first place.

MELINDA
I was pregnant and my boyfriend...

SONNY
Albert Griffith.

MELINDA
Oh, you know...

SONNY
Great guy.

Cont.

MELINDA
He drove me into San Francisco for an abortion. On the way out of the hotel where they did it, I started to hemmorhage. He panicked. Ran off and left me bleeding to death on the steps of the Franklin Hospital. Just dumped me and drove off. I was cut up so bad I had to have a hysterectomy. Afterwards, I was too ashamed to go home.

SONNY
Where'd you go?

MELINDA
I lived on the streets of the Haight. Then Jack came along and so many things happened that I couldn't face going home at all...

She begins to cry.

MELINDA
What's the difference? You don't care about any of this...

She turns away from him.
He grabs her and spins her around to face him.

SONNY
Your mother paid me eighty-seven dollars to find you and I chased all over the goddamned country. I don't know if I did it for Rosie or for myself or for some idea I had of you, but I know one thing. I goddamned well didn't do it for eighty-seven dollars. So don't you tell me that I don't fucking well care.

MELINDA
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I've made such a mess of my life. I've probably made a mess of your life now, too...

He leans over and puts his arm around her.

SONNY
Mine's always been a mess...

MELINDA
I just want to forget it all, Sonny. Please help me to forget ...please...

She presses against him. Sonny pauses, makes no further move toward her. Suddenly, she pulls away.

MELINDA
You don't want me. I can't blame you. Not after all you know.

SONNY
It's Trahearne...

MELINDA
He doesn't want me anymore.

SONNY
He went to a lot of trouble for a man who doesn't want you.

MELINDA
He thinks I'm a whore. He just wanted to make sure, that's all. I don't know if I can go on living with him. I don't know how he'll be...

SONNY
But you love him...

She sits up straight, composed.

MELINDA
Maybe you're right.

Sonny pulls out the keys to his rented car, opens her hand and drops them into it.

SONNY
Go on home. Trahearne's lucky to have you and he knows it.

MELINDA
My car's up at Selma's.

SONNY
Okay. Stacy and I will pick it up tomorrow and bring it to you... Unless you want to run away with me...

She smiles.
Her hand closes tightly around the keys.

Cont.

SONNY
Do me a favor. Go see Rosie as soon as you can. You can take Fireball back to her. He's a beer hall mutt not a road dog.

MELINDA
My mother used to hate dogs...

SONNY
I think she still does.

Melinda laughs.

MELINDA
Then maybe she'll let me keep him.

SONNY
Oh, you can give her back this, too.

He tugs the yearbook photo out of his back pocket and gives it to her.
Melinda stares down at the image...

MELINDA
You've been looking for a ghost...

SONNY
Yeah. But I'm not sure if it's yours or mine.

She kisses him gently...
Sonny's arms tighten around her to prolong the kiss.

MELINDA
Good-bye, Sonny.

She walks out the door without looking back, Fireball trotting at her heels.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT 91

Sonny moves along the corridor, passes his own room and heads toward the bar.

INT. BAR 92

Sonny settles into a booth and a WAITRESS approaches. She wears a bright red pinafore style cocktail outfit with a short skirt and a big bow in the back.

SONNY
Scotch rocks.

WAITRESS
It'll be last call in a few minutes. Want to order two?

SONNY
Better make it three.

WAITRESS
Rough night, huh? You a trucker?

SONNY
How'd you guess?

WAITRESS
I can always spot a man's trade. I got good instincts.

SONNY
I'll bet.

WAITRESS
See those two men at the bar? They're scouting a site for Burger King. I got it right off. Not the Burger King, part, a course, but...

Sonny's attention is diverted to the doorway. Trahearne stands there staring at him.

SONNY
Yeah. What's that guy in the doorway look like to you?

WAITRESS
Trouble...

BARTENDER
Last call.

She goes back to the bar to order. Trahearne comes over and sits in Sonny's booth.

TRAHEARNE
Well, did you fuck her?

SONNY
I ought to kill you, you stupid bastard. She's on her way home to you right now, scared to death about how you'll feel. And you don't feel a fuckin' thing, do you? Booze has numbed you out. You got nothing left, assuming you ever had anything, you fucking phony.

The Waitress appears with three drinks and both men are silent until she leaves.

SONNY
You wanted to find out all about her. Well, now you have and you can't take it.

TRAHEARNE
I don't think I can live without her.

SONNY
You don't seem to live with her too well.

TRAHEARNE
I used to look forward to the day I'd be too old to give a damn about women. I used to think that when that day came, all that energy I wasted chasing pussy would go into my work. I thought I'd grow old and wise, sexless as an oracle. It didn't work that way. It came on me sooner than I expected. It drove me crazy...or crazier. And when Melinda rekindled the fires, I was so grateful that I married her. Now I'm afraid to lose her.

SONNY
You don't need a detective, you need a shrink.

Sonny gets up and walks out.
Trahearne finishes his drink and begins on Sonny's extra glass.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT 93

Sonny moves to his own door, opens it and closes it with a thud, awakening Stacy.

INT. MOTEL ROOM 94

Stacy sits up and smiles at him.
She's naked.

STACY
Why'd you let me fall asleep.

He climbs into bed with her.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. DRIVING SHOT - DAY 95

Sonny and Stacy are in the front seat of the El Camino towing Melinda's yellow VW.

SONNY
(voice over)
You know, I think I've finally discovered what I do best.

STACY
(voice over)
I got my own ideas about that.

SONNY
(voice over)
Tow cars...

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVING SHOT - NIGHT 96

On the road to Trahearne's house. They pull up into the driveway and stop abruptly when they see what's ahead.

EXT. TRAHEARNE HOUSE 97

There are three police cars with blinking lights and an ambulance.
All the patio lights are on.

Sonny jumps out of the car and runs to the patio. Stacy tears after him.

EXT. TRAHEARNE PATIO 98

Trahearne sits next to the swimming pool, eyes glazed. Melinda's nude body floats on top of the water, is streaked with blood from the bullet holes in her back. TWO AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS are fishing Fireball's bullet-ridden body out of the water.
They lay the dog on the ground.

Sonny rushes over to Trahearne who stares vacantly into the pool.

TRAHEARNE
Desperate characters...

Sonny grabs him by the shirt.

Cont.

SONNY
Why?

A COP pulls Sonny away from Trahearne.

COP
Who're you?

SONNY
What happened?

COP
We ask the questions.

Sonny decks him and makes a lunge at Trahearne. TWO COPS grab Sonny and cuff his hands behind his back, then pull him over to a police car.

Trahearne never looks up.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL VISITORS' ROOM - DAY 99

Sonny sits at a table. He is unshaven and morose as a GUARD ushers Stacy into the room. Without makeup and her usual tough demeanor, she almost looks like a high school girl.

STACY
I heard they're dropping the charges against you.

SONNY
Yeah.

STACY
Trahearne told them all about those guys in Reno.

Pause.

SONNY
The cops been giving you a hard time?

STACY
Nah. It's okay. Besides we'll probably be back on the road tomorrow.

SONNY
I don't think so.

Cont.

STACY
What do you mean?

SONNY
I phoned Selma. She's coming to pick you up today.

Pause.

STACY
Her idea or yours?

SONNY
Both.

STACY
I thought we were a pretty good team...

SONNY
We were. Look, I'm sorry...It's just all wrong. I shouldn't have let you get involved in this mess in the first place...

STACY
Don't feel sorry for me. I'm okay. I wanted to come. I learned a lot. I learned I'm really able to take care of myself now. I'm going to move away from Selma's, get myself a real job...Where you going next?

SONNY
Sonoma. Melinda's going to be buried there.

The Guard appears back in the doorway. Stacy stands to leave.

STACY
Well, you ever go back into the towing business and get lonely, just give me a call. Selma'll always know where I am.

SONNY
Sure thing. Good luck.

STACY
You, too.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSIE'S - DAY 100

A closed sign hangs in the front window. Sonny tries the door. It's locked. He walks around to the back of the beer hall and sees Rosie sitting on the edge of an uneven old pier overlooking the pond behind her trailer.

EXT. PIER 101

Rosie leans over a fishing pole, staring out at the water; Sonny sits down next to her without speaking...

ROSIE
I know, Sonny. It ain't right, is it?

SONNY
I wish I knew what to say, Rosie.

ROSIE
Ain't nothing to say. At least I got to talk to her once. That's better than nothing. She told me everything...Guess it was that Reno mob, huh? Probably somebody she'd never even seen before... I don't reckon I could hire you again to go after 'em?

SONNY
No, you couldn't hire me, and it wouldn't do any good.

ROSIE
The fella who killed her, he probably didn't even know her ...didn't even know why...

SONNY
That's right.

She wipes her nose on her sleeve.
Sonny slips his hand in his pocket and withdraws a bank envelope...The same brown envelope containing Katherine's payment.

SONNY
She had some money stashed away, Rosie, and I know she'd want you to have it. Said something about the two of you taking a trip together...

ROSIE
Did she, Sonny? That sounds just like her.

SONNY
Hell, Rosie, why don't you get away from here for awhile. Take a trip to Hawaii.

ROSIE
What would I do in Hawaya, Sonny?

SONNY
I don't know what anybody does in Hawaii, but lots of folks go there.

ROSIE
...You know, it might be nice to go back to Oklahoma for a bit. Haven't even met my kin down there. Maybe I could do that. But what about this place?

SONNY
Don't you worry about this place. I'll take care of things here.

ROSIE
Ain't you got nothin' better to do?

SONNY
Nope.

ROSIE
Well, I'm sorry for you then.

Pause.

ROSIE
Ya know, I been fishing in this lake for twenty-five years and I never once caught anything.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSIE'S - NIGHT 102

Sonny leans against the bar just as Rosie used to, arms crossed on his chest and eyes closed. Lester and Oney are back at their usual stools...A slow, sad song plays on the jukebox.

The door slams, Sonny looks up as Trahearne lumbers across the threshold.

TRAHEARNE
How you boys doing?

No response.
Trahearne walks over and sits at the bar across from Sonny.

TRAHEARNE
Aw, hell, you know I'd be down to see her grave as soon as I got over the shock. Hell, I'd have come to visit you in jail if I had the strength. You understand...

SONNY
Sure, I understand...

TRAHEARNE
Hey, you're not pissed at me or anything, are you?

No response.

TRAHEARNE
I haven't been able to write a word...since that night.

SONNY
Maybe you're standing too far from your typewriter.

TRAHEARNE
Yeah, maybe...You ever read any of my books, Sonny?

SONNY
Can't say I have...

TRAHEARNE
I made my literary reputation with six highly praised volumes of poetry. Two were nominated for national prizes. But I made my fortune with three novels -- the first was published in 1950, the second in 1959 and the third in 1971. They were all best-sellers and because of my renown as a poet, well-reviewed...But, let me tell you the truth. They're hack work, cluttered with literary allusions and symbols. Fancy dreck. The male

TRAHEARNE (Cont.)
characters, even the villains and cowards, cling to a bankrupt code. And the female characters all just serve as stage props, scenery and victims...

SONNY
Yeah. Right.

A long moment.

SONNY
I want to show you something, old man.

He reaches under the bar and lifts out a rifle.

SONNY
This here is a Remington 7mm Magnum with a Redfield 3 X 9 variable power scope loaded with 175 grain rounds. It'll drop an elk at three hundred yards. Little bitty hole going in, but you can put your fist in the exit wound.

TRAHEARNE
You're going after those bastards in Reno, huh? By God, let me go with you. It won't be the same without that Goddamn dog but we got their asses before. We can do it again. It was that Hyland son-of-a-bitch. I know it.

SONNY
He was dead when we left the house.

TRAHEARNE
Huh? What are you talking about?

SONNY
I saw the body. Stacy nailed him. She just didn't know it.

TRAHEARNE
That leaves Torres and those two others.

Cont.

SONNY
They're professionals. If those guys came up to your place, they'd have taken you out, too.

Sonny lays the rifle on the bar, pointing at Trahearne.

SONNY
It was you...You couldn't believe she wasn't a whore. Then when you found out she wasn't, you couldn't stand it. She was too much for you either way. You hated her because she was a whore. You hated her because she wasn't...Truth is you hate yourself. And I'll tell you something else. You should.

TRAHEARNE
You got it all wrong. I loved her. I haven't been able to write or anything...I can't get my mind off of her.

SONNY
Go home, old man, try to write. Some fine afternoon, you're going to step out on your sundeck, and I'm going to blow your belly right out through your backside.

Trahearne shrinks back from him.

SONNY
You're dead...Go home before you start to stink.

As Trahearne walks out the door, Sonny follows him.

EXT. ROSIE'S - NIGHT 103

Sonny stands in front.
He holds the rifle firmly, butt on the ground at his side like a sentry.

TRAHEARNE
You've got it all wrong.

SONNY
No, I haven't, old man.

Trahearne gets into his Cadillac and drives off, taillights slowly receding into the distance.

FADE OUT

THE END